

JANUARY-MARCH 1954

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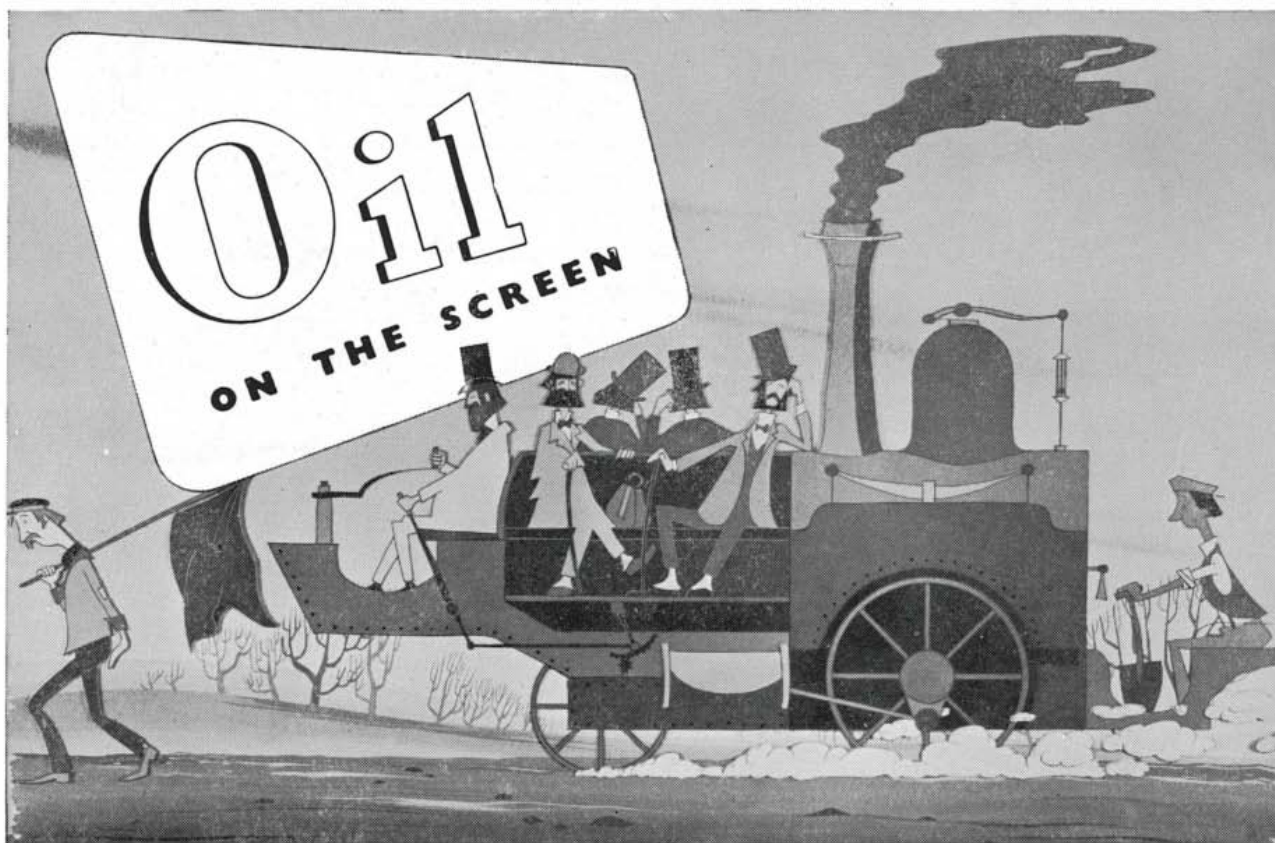
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GERMANY:	Gerd Treuhaft	FRANCE:	Francis Koval
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We are grateful to the *News Chronicle* for permission to reprint Richard Winnington's cartoon and also Vicky's drawing of Richard Winnington.

IN THE PICTURE

The Twin Pillars

Despite a number of vicissitudes the twin pillars of British film production now appear to have their future assured until 1957. It must be admitted that the description of the British Film Production Fund and the National Film Finance Corporation as "twin pillars" is not one with which everybody will agree. Mr. Harold Lever, M.P., whose filibuster on November 20th postponed the second reading of the Bill to extend the N.F.F.C.'s life, had some harsh things to say about the Corporation's activities and seemed to regard this particular pillar as "an outrage on the taxpayer", while, to judge from the published reports of the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association meetings, there are not a few exhibitors who disapprove strongly of the other.

Negotiations for the voluntary continuance of the Production Fund for three years beyond August, 1954, took nearly seven months to complete. During this period the Government intervened on more than one occasion, making it clear that if the four trade associations did not reach agreement on a voluntary basis, then a statutory scheme would be imposed. On October 21st, the C.E.A. General Council by the narrow margin of 33 votes to 30 refused to agree to the voluntary scheme, but a referendum to the various branches of the Association reversed this decision some days later by 19 votes to 4. The other three trade bodies having previously agreed to the scheme the Fund had weathered its storm.

CinemaScope

ERNEST LINDGREN writes: The proportions of the rectangular screen with which cinemagoers have been familiar for nearly 60 years (roughly 4 by 3 which, dividing one by the other, may be expressed in terms of the coefficient 1.33) were originally fixed by Edison for his Kinetoscope, the parent of all commercially successful developments of cinematography. Other inventors favoured other proportions—one, for example, a square picture extending along five perforations instead of four—but the imperative necessity for films to find the widest circulation made standardisation inevitable. The shape of the Edison picture was probably derived from the theatre proscenium, but it also approximates to a frame shape popular amongst artists; in fact the proportions of a rectangle with the coefficient of 1.6 (the famous "golden mean") were believed by many to have special virtues, both in themselves and as a source for compositional patterns which could be built up within them. At a more practical level, if one shape has to be standardised, the horizontal rectangle corresponds most nearly to the oval field



Lionel and Ethel Barrymore and Louis Calhern appear as themselves in "Main Street to Broadway", a film sponsored by the Council of the Living Theatre and dealing with the careers of a young playwright and a young actress.

of human vision and lends itself to the lateral movements which our eyes make most easily and most often.

Artists, however, do not always paint in the same frame shape; and occasionally film artists have rebelled against the limits of this standard rectangle. D. W. Griffith, for example, occasionally masked his frame in order to get narrow upright compositions (e.g. bodies falling from the high walls of besieged Babylon in *Intolerance*) or long horizontal ones (e.g. the marching armies in *Birth of a Nation*). In 1923, Abel Gance in France experimented with a triptych screen in his film *Napoleon*, sometimes presenting three different but related pictures side by side, sometimes expanding a single panoramic composition over the whole area. And in 1930, when the American film industry first toyed with the idea of widening the screen to give a coefficient of 2.3, Eisenstein delivered a lecture in Hollywood in which he argued the virtues of a square shape which could be made large or small and could be masked either horizontally or vertically.

The original Edison shape, however, has continued to survive these threats. With the coming of sound the width of the picture was at first reduced to a coefficient of 1.15 to accommodate the sound track, but in 1933 the original proportions were restored again by a slight reduction of the height. The basic problem was apparently an insoluble one. No single shape could possibly suit every kind of pictorial composition, vertical and horizontal, extended panoramas and close-ups, and the 4 by 3 compromise seemed as good as any other.

Now suddenly in 1953 an American company revives in CinemaScope the 1930 idea of a wider screen, and is clearly determined to make it a commercial success. Has it come to stay? Is this indeed a new step forward in the development of the film? The only thing which can be said with certainty is that the commercial sponsorship of this new technical development will give directors and script-writers the opportunity to explore its possibilities. If they find it gives them greater freedom and range, either in its present form or as the result of new adaptations, it is likely to stay; if, on the other hand, they find it involves more loss than gain, it is hardly like to survive.

"The Little Fugitive": Richie Andrusco plays the small boy in this independently made American film about a child's excursion to Coney Island. The directors are Ray Ashley and Morris Engel.





"Main Street to Broadway": Agnes Moorehead and Tallulah Bankhead. Others in the film are Helen Hayes, Mary Martin, Shirley Booth, Rex Harrison and Lilli Palmer.

"Yesterday's Wow"

There are signs that producers and exhibitors are weakening in face of the difficulties which attend stereoscopic systems requiring the use of glasses. The warnings came early, and from many quarters. Last March, Mr. Claude Bernardine, a reader of the *Daily Mail*, forecast that people would become so accustomed to having things thrown at them that they would lose the instinct to avoid moving objects, with a consequent rise in the accident rate; complaints of eye strain poured into the correspondence columns; glasses were lost, or stolen, from cinemas. In August *The Economist* surveyed the high costs of extra staff and equipment necessary for exhibiting 3-D films and emphasised the comparative cheapness of wide-screen systems.

In any case there seems to be considerable audience resistance, now the first novelty has worn off, to spectacles. Last autumn *Variety*—who had previously reported that many exhibitors were chary of spectacle systems—was already speaking of 3-D as "Yesterday's Wow". Hollywood producers, the magazine said, were adopting a wait-and-see policy: "The attitude is that specially selected yarns, filmed with technical know-how, and viewed through proper polaroid glasses can succeed at the pay window. Showmen now admit that the decline of stereo pix is due in part to technically faulty, quickly made 'B'-pix rushed on to the market to make a 'quick buck'".

Early last September 20th Century-Fox's only 3-D feature, *Inferno*, was released in this country. It was initially advertised as, "GREAT IN ANY MEDIUM—IN 3-D TERRIFIC!" Later, however, a 20th Century spokesman said that the film would be generally released as a "flatie" and the advertisements (influenced by Fox's own, non-stereoscopic Cinema-Scope process?) now claimed: "All exhibitors can now play the film which the trade and national critics say is even better in 2-D".

At about the same time *Variety* spoke of a "last ditch fight" by equipment manufacturers to keep 3-D alive, and carried a headline "LONDON BACKS AWAY FROM 3-D". This was in connection with R.K.O.'s decision to release its first 3-D picture, *Second Chance*, flat. The article surveyed

Marlon Brando in Laslo Benedek's "The Wild One" (previously called "The Cyclists' Raid"), concerning a gang of motor-cyclists who wantonly wreck a small American town.

the whole position. "The number of feature houses (in Britain) wired for 3-D is substantially below 300, and a large slice of these are confined to the Associated British circuit, which made the alteration to cash in on the gimmick of House of Wax." Warners' *House of Wax*, with a 21-week pre-release run at the Warner Theatre, was, according to *Variety*, the one major 3-D success in this country.

The most recent and apparently most serious blow to 3-D, though, is the case of M.G.M.'s musical, *Kiss Me Kate*. The company announced that an experiment in exhibiting 3-D and normal versions of the film concurrently in the cinemas had shown a marked preference for 3-D. Forty per cent more people, it was said, attended the stereoscopic showings. But in November *Time* reported: "Faced with a choice of exhibiting *Kiss Me Kate* in either 3-D (with glasses) or the flat version, Manhattan's gigantic Radio City Music Hall chose the old-fashioned flatie. . . . The decision is a blow to any serious future Hollywood attempts at 3-D with glasses."

Meanwhile maximum publicity goes to any experiments with 3-D systems which do not need the use of glasses; but on this Sam Goldwyn has given his opinion: "Not in our time," he said.

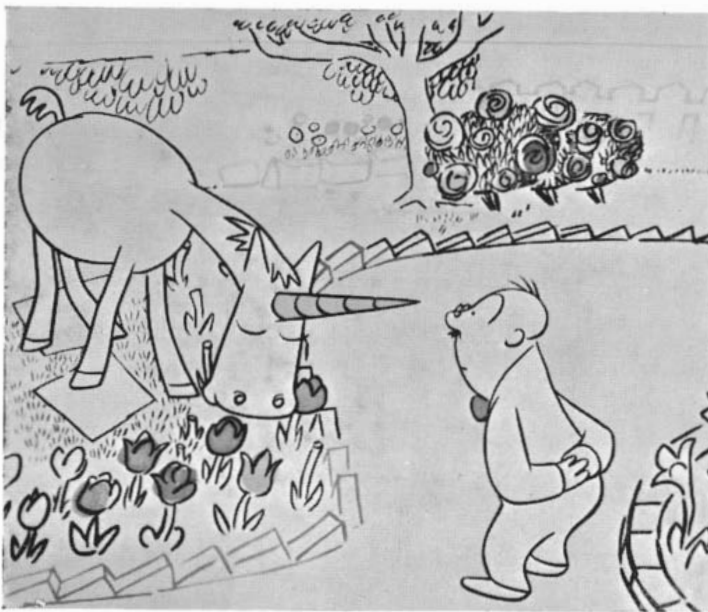
An American Visitor

"The fundamentals of civilisation rest on the Ten Commandments" Adolph Zukor told a gathering of London critics at a lunch given in honour of his fifty years' association with the cinema. "It doesn't matter whether you believe in Christ or not. There's one thing common to all: honour your father and mother. If Cecil puts that over in The Ten Commandments, we'll have done a great service to the world." Mr. Zukor paused a moment, then added with a conviction born of some four decades of successful collaboration: "Mr. De Mille will do it."

Zukor is one of the small group of business pioneers—Jesse Lasky, Marcus Loew, Nicholas and Joseph Schenck, Cecil B. De Mille and Sam Goldwyn are among his early associates—who came to the cinema in the early days of the century. His career reads like a list of the main events in the history of Hollywood showmanship: an early advocate of full-length films, he used Mary Pickford in her first feature film, made Rudolph Valentino's *The Sheik*; worked with Douglas Fairbanks, William S. Hart, Gloria Swanson, Clara Bow, Pola Negri; persuaded Sarah Bernhardt and Lily Langtry to appear in films; imported Jannings and later Dietrich from Germany, Chevalier from France; is today head of the company—Paramount—which in 1953 produced *Roman Holiday* and *Shane*.

Naturally, he was asked how he does it. Zukor has called his recent autobiography "The Public is Never Wrong" and





"The Unicorn in the Garden": This new U.P.A. cartoon is the first to take a Thurber story for its subject.

this, simply, is his formula: to act on the public's reactions—he still spends much time in cinemas observing audience responses—rather than on his own. 3-D and CinemaScope? Yes, he believes both have come to stay, but the story must always determine the method of presentation. Would Paramount continue to make ordinary flat films? Yes, said Mr. Zukor, they would, but there was little conviction in his voice.

Gradually, as he went on talking, it became easier to identify the gentle-voiced 80-year-old gentleman with the fabulous figure of the history books. A guest who asked a question which did not please was brushed aside with the authority of a man who expects to be obeyed; and questions about the great stars of yesterday were dismissed with affirmations of his lasting personal friendship. Mr. Zukor's main interests remain very much in the present, notably in the future of Audrey Hepburn and *The Ten Commandments*.

Alexandrov in London

JOHN GILLET writes: Apart from the fleeting appearance of Pudovkin some four years ago, the first Soviet feature director to visit this country since the war was Georgi Alexandrov, who came here last November with a large cultural delegation from the U.S.S.R. Alexandrov's career spans almost the entire history of the Russian cinema: he was Eisenstein's assistant and scenarist on his major silent films and on the abortive Mexican picture; in the 'thirties he directed a series of musical comedies, including *The Jazz Comedy*, *Volga-Volga* and *The Circus*, and in recent years his works have included the more portentous *Meeting on the Elbe* and *Glinka*. I met Alexandrov in his hotel, catching him as he was in the midst of a whirl of lectures and visits round the country. A heavy man with a ready smile, he obviously enjoys talking about his own and other people's films; his English is very good and we had recourse to an interpreter only occasionally. He spoke first about *Time in the Sun*, which had had its London première that week; he was obviously very concerned with the fate of the Mexican film and mentioned several of the Hollywood productions in which Eisenstein's material had been used. Apparently, he had not seen *Thunder Over Mexico*. "It's all in little pieces now", he said sadly.

He seemed pleased when I mentioned that several of his own films had been well received here. "The Jazz Comedy is still being shown in Moscow, you know", he said. "People still seem to like it". He mentioned that he had been discussing the question of the distribution of old and new films with some British film-makers, and he obviously found our distribution set-up rather perplexing. "A recent film was shown for the first time at 45 theatres in Moscow simultaneously", he

said, "and some of the old ones also have long runs because there are always young people who will not have seen them".

We talked about the films by Pudovkin, Dovzhenko and Donskoi which had been enthusiastically greeted by the serious British critics, and it became clear that he knew little about our film writers or publications. I told him that we knew something of the recent discussions among Soviet film-makers, but he appeared to have read nothing by our contemporary critics—though he knew *The Film Till Now*. He spoke little of recent British films, but hoped that the projected British Film Festival in Russia would be a success. I gave him a copy of *SIGHT AND SOUND* and he chuckled when he saw pictures of Gloria Swanson and von Sternberg: "I knew them all, you know". He was enthusiastic about some films on painting and sculpture he had made recently between his features, also a circus film he had supervised. "Our people want more comedies now", he said, "when I go back to Moscow I shall make some more."

We had now been joined by other members of the Soviet delegation, including Mr. Bogatyrev, the head of the British section of VOKS, who were preparing to go out. Before saying good-bye, I asked Alexandrov what were his impressions of London after 24 years (he first came here with Eisenstein and Tisse before they all set out for America and Mexico). He smiled and said: "It is much nicer; people are very friendly and there is more democracy. I want to see more of your country, especially Stratford, and talk with as many people as possible. It is better that way".

Scientific Film Congress

A CORRESPONDENT writes: More fun, less fact, one newspaper critic is reported to have cried at the Edinburgh Festival. What, one wonders, might he have said of the 7th Annual Congress of the International Scientific Film Association held in London last September? For here the cinema of fact—the facts of nature and of science, how they are searched out, considered, organised, explained and built upon—was *en vedette*. Not surprisingly, since nothing often turns out drearier than "fun" unrelated to fact, the Congress offered, along with some inevitable dross, much that could give pleasure, of a particular but important sort, to the film-minded.

The opening, with a message of welcome from H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh as Patron, and a thoughtful inaugural address from Sir Walter Monckton, was agreeably auspicious, and its setting, the National Film Theatre, admirably convenient. The films shown at the opening "gala" and its companion-performance a few nights later, each came from one of sixteen different countries. *The Desert Locust*, produced by James Carr of World-Wide, reminded us that the matching of form to function justifies itself in any medium; the exposition was direct and sure, and wisely, the commentary did not melodramatise the film's often fearsomely splendid images. The previous work of the Hungarian, Istvan Homoki-Nagy (*Birds of Lake Balaton*, *The Saker Falcon* and *Kingdom on the Waters*), had led one to expect much from his latest film, *From Blossom Time to Autumn Frost*: it turned out to be his most considerable film so far, an intimate, sometimes tender, sometimes too ruthless-seeming, fresco of life in a nature reserve by the Danube. *Life in the Arctic* by Alexander Zguridi, who came from Moscow to present it, was an outstanding nature documentary, reflecting the two years of research and effort that went to its making. *Out of the North*, about the habits of the wild ducks and geese of America, revealed in Larry Madison a director-cameraman of exceptional sensitivity. Incidentally, all these three nature films in colour eschewed, advantageously in my view, the fancy cutting and theatricality of the Disney nature series. Joseph Leclerc's *Flammes du Soleil* was a rather loosely compiled but impressive celestial spectacle, in which solar explosions, speeded-up some hundreds of times, rose to heights of a million kilometres. At the other end of the size-scale, Joe Durden, now with the National Film Board of Canada, applied colour, microscopy, the time-lapse cinema mechanism and other techniques to the embryology of the chick; the "growth" on the screen, within a minute or two, of the living embryo from a minute speck in the egg to the baby chick pecking its way out of the shell was a *tour de force*. The Italian colour film *I Fiori* applied the same speeded-up technique with great accomplishment to the growth of flowers.

Much that was of interest can only be hinted at in a short note. At the research meetings, there were, for example, demonstrations of the use of image-converter techniques, making possible the photography of events taking place at the speed of light itself, and for refinements in X-ray cinematography. Besides some remarkable studies with infra-red light of the nocturnal combativeness of fish, Dr. Gotthard Wolf showed examples from the "Encyclopædia-on-Film", for the use of natural history museums and others, begun at Göttingen—beautifully shot records in normal and slow motion of the movements of coypu rats, ducks, elephants and chimpanzees. The industrial sessions ranged widely, covering, among other topics, films for the induction and training of new workers, for improved factory lay-outs, time and motion study, and research into problems of ageing. Agriculture was well served by an important group of films from Australia, and films in this category included an unexpectedly fresh and even lyrical instructional film from Poland on poultry breeding. A sign of the times was a lively and highly technical symposium on stereoscopy, and there was a conference on the diffusion of science by television and televised films, with speakers from Britain, U.S.A., Holland and U.N.E.S.C.O., much enlivened by the demonstration from Mr. Alfred Wurmser, of the B.B.C., of his system of what may be called "animation while you wait". The applications of film to medical research, diagnoses and teaching were discussed at a number of sessions, and illustrated by some seventy films drawn from a score of countries. One outcome of these sessions was a memorandum embodying much sensible guidance on the production of medical films, which the Association is circulating internationally.

Work in Progress

Great Britain

David Lean: *The Time of the Cuckoo*, from the Broadway play by Arthur Laurents.

Alexander Mackendrick: *The Man Who Wasn't There*, a comedy to be written by Mackendrick in collaboration with the American screen-writer Sy Bartlett.

Brian Desmond Hurst: *Captain Jan*, based on the novel by Jan de Hartog, scripted by Geoffrey Household and possibly starring Kirk Douglas.

Charles Frend: *The West Window*, a melodrama from a story by Eric Ambler.

Max Ophuls: a screen version of Nancy Mitford's novel *The Blessing*.

Herbert Wilcox: *Lilacs in the Spring*, a screen adaptation of *The Glorious Days*; Anna Neagle stars and Ivor Novello's "We'll gather lilacs in the spring again" provides the theme tune.

Basil Wright (producer) and Adrian de Potier (director) have completed *The Drawings of Leonardo da Vinci*, a half-hour study of the Windsor collection of Leonardo's drawings. Michael Ayrton's commentary is spoken by Cecil Day Lewis and Sir Laurence Olivier; the music is by Alan Rawsthorne; and Mr. A. E. Popham of the British Museum acted as adviser.

France

Jacques Becker: *Touchez Pas au Grisbi*, a story of crime in Montmartre based on a novel by Albert Simonin. Leading players are Jean Gabin and René Dary.

Sacha Guitry: *Si Versailles m'était conté*, a film in colour about Versailles, government-sponsored and all-star. The cast includes Guitry himself, Michel Auclair, Jean-Pierre Aumont, Danièle Delorme, Daniel Gélin, Jean Marais, Jean-Louis Barrault, Micheline Presle.

Robert Siodmak: a remake of Feyder's *Le Grand Jeu*, with Arletty and Gina Lollobrigida.

Italy

Luchino Visconti: *Uragano d'Estate*, with Farley Granger, Valli and Massimo Girotti.

Robert Rossen: *Mambo*, with Silvana Mangano, Shelley Winters and Vittorio Gassman.

Alessandro Blasetti: *Tempi Nostri*, a modern counterpart to *Altri Tempi*, with stories by Pratolini, Marotta and others. In the cast: de Sica, Silvana Pampanini, Cosetta Greco, Yves Montand, Danièle Delorme, Francois Perier.

U.S.A.

John Ford: *The Long Gray Line*, a story about West Point, with Tyrone Power and Maureen O'Hara.

William Wyler: a screen version of *Lélia*, André Maurois' life of George Sand, with Jennifer Jones.

Joseph Mankiewicz: *The Barefoot Contessa*, to be made in Europe; Humphrey Bogart and Ava Gardner star.

Nicholas Ray: *Johnny Guitar*, a Western in which Joan Crawford plays "a sort of female Shane" and shoots it out with Mercedes McCambridge in the last reel.

"Le Diable Amoureux": Gérard Philipe and Joan Greenwood in a scene from René Clement's new film, the story of a modern Don Juan. The film was made in England, with many scenes shot in the London streets.



A GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

***—Outstanding ;

**—Enjoyable or out of the run ;

*—Entertaining.

- **ACTRESS, THE (*M.G.M.*) *Life with Father*-style comedy about a stage-struck girl and her irascible parent; sentimental, quietly engaging and very well played by Spencer Tracy and Jean Simmons. (Teresa Wright; director, George Cukor.)
- *ALL THE BROTHERS WERE VALIANT (*M.G.M.*) Adventure on the high seas, involving whaling, mutiny, a treasure hunt and rivalry between brothers; lively stuff. (Robert Taylor, Stewart Granger; director, Richard Thorpe.)
- ***BAND WAGON, THE (*M.G.M.*) A gay, stylish and thoroughly entertaining back-stage musical, with Fred Astaire in superlative form and a most amusing performance from Jack Buchanan. *Reviewed.* (Cyd Charisse; director, Vincente Minnelli.)
- *BEAT THE DEVIL (*Independent*) Comedy thriller in which an English couple encounter uranium-gangsters, undergo shipwreck, capture by Arabs, etc.; erratic and rather slapdash. *Reviewed.* (Humphrey Bogart, Jennifer Jones, Robert Morley; director, John Huston.)
- *BLOWING WILD (*Warners*) Bandits, oil wells, a triangle situation between two men and a bad woman, and Frankie Laine WarnerPhonically singing "Marina Mine, Set Me Free" make up a sizeable slice of hokum. (Barbara Stanwyck, Gary Cooper; director, Hugo Fregonese.)
- ***CARROSSE D'OR, LE (*Films de France*) A flamboyant actress arrives in Spanish America during the last century, with a travelling company, and bewitches the viceroys. Renoir's new film, based on a short play by Merimée, has a wonderful theatre atmosphere, Magnani's superb performance and some memorable colour. (Duncan Lamont, Paul Campbell.)
- *DANGEROUS WHEN WET (*M.G.M.*) Esther Williams enters the *Daily Mail* Channel swimming race; cheerful musical. (Fernando Lamas; director, Charles Walters.)
- DAY TO REMEMBER, A (*G.F.D.*) The darts team of a British pub make a day trip to Boulogne and become predictably involved with the natives. (Stanley Holloway, Donald Sinden, Odile Versois; director, Ralph Thomas.)
- *FLIGHT TO TANGIER (*Paramount*) Prolonged chase of innocents by police on the one hand and murderous racketeers on the other. Exciting when comprehensible. (Joan Fontaine, Jack Palance, Corinne Calvet; director, Charles Marquis Warren.)
- FORT TI (*Columbia*) Undistinguished 3-D adventure epic of fighting between French and English in North America in 1759. Most of it is in your lap. (George Montgomery, Joan Vohs; director, William Castle.)
- *FROM HERE TO ETERNITY (*Columbia*) Fred Zinnemann's version of James Jones' novel about the American army before Pearl Harbour; savagely unpleasant. *Reviewed.* (Montgomery Clift, Burt Lancaster, Deborah Kerr.)
- *GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES (*Fox*) Anita Loos' story of the archetypal gold-digger reaches the screen via a Broadway musical version; a potentially funny story has been turned into a vehicle for Marilyn Monroe. (Jane Russell; director, Howard Hawks.)
- GRACE MOORE STORY, THE (*Warners*) Unimaginative biography of the famous singer; a few opera excerpts, but mainly revue numbers, conventionally staged. Technicolor. (Kathryn Grayson, Merv Griffin; director, Gordon Douglas.)
- *HEART OF THE MATTER, THE (*British Lion*) An honest, if pedestrian, adaptation of Graham Greene's novel about the trials of a Catholic police commissioner in West Africa; Trevor Howard gives a most impressive performance. *Reviewed.* (Elizabeth Allan, Maria Schell; director, George More O'Ferrall.)
- HERE COME THE GIRLS (*Paramount*) Bob Hope, actor in a musical road show, becomes the target for a homicidal maniac; sub-standard for this comedian. (Arlene Dahl, Tony Martin; director, Claude Binyon.)
- HOUDINI (*Paramount*) The career of Houdini; a promising subject given routine screen "biographical" treatment. (Tony Curtis, Janet Leigh; director, George Marshall.)

I, THE JURY (*United Artists*) A thriller from a Mickey Spillane novel; crude, confused crime in 3-D. (Biff Elliot, Peggie Castle; director, Harry Essex.)

JAZZ SINGER, THE (*Warners*) A remake of the first sound film, with Danny Thomas taking the Al Jolson part; a good deal too sentimental for most tastes. (Peggy Lee, Mildred Dunnock; director, Michael Curtiz.)

***JULIUS CAESAR (*M.G.M.*) Arguably the best filmed Shakespeare yet; certainly a remarkable achievement in its fidelity to the text, the quality of its performances and its direct and vigorous visual style. (John Gielgud, James Mason, Marlon Brando, etc.; director, Joseph Mankiewicz.)

**KIDNAPPERS, THE (*G.F.D.*) Neil Patterson's story of a stern Scottish grandfather and his two orphan grandchildren, set in Nova Scotia early in this century. An engaging performance from 5-year-old Vincent Winter, but the film lacks a real sense of place. (Duncan Macrae, Adrienne Corri; director, Philip Leacock.)

*MEET MR. LUCIFER (*G.F.D.*) A comedy showing the dire consequences of watching television; tame satirical fantasy, with some amusing moments. (Stanley Holloway, Peggy Cummins, Gordon Jackson; director, Anthony Pelissier.)

**MOGAMBO (*M.G.M.*) White hunter Clark Gable is loved by an English anthropologist's wife and an American show girl. Technicolor and gorillas are also in evidence. The material seems unworthy of John Ford, but he has managed to make it entertaining. (Ava Gardner, Grace Kelly.)

PERSONAL AFFAIR (*G.F.D.*) A schoolgirl's three-day disappearance causes scandal in an English country town; an implausible story, narrated at a high emotional pitch. (Gene Tierney, Leo Genn, Glynis Johns; director, Anthony Pelissier.)

*PUCCINI (*London Films*) An Italian screen biography of the composer, quite competently done and with numerous operatic excerpts. Technicolor. (Gabriele Ferzetti, Marta Toren, Nadia Gray; director, Carmine Gallone.)

**ROBE, THE (*Fox*) Romans and Christians on the CinemaScope screen. *Reviewed.* (Richard Burton, Jean Simmons, Victor Mature; director, Henry Koster.)

*ROB ROY (*R.K.O.*) Robin Hood adventures transferred to a Highland setting, as the redcoats chase a kilted Richard Todd up and down the mountains; reliable entertainment for children. (Glynis Johns, James Robertson Justice; director, Harold French.)

*SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS (*R.K.O.*) Disney perennial. This was the first of the feature length cartoons, and still has more vigour and freshness than most.

***SUN SHINES BRIGHT, THE (*Republic*) John Ford's study of life in a small Southern town and of its leading citizen, Judge Priest. Affectionate and humane, an outstanding picture. (Charles Winninger, Arleen Whelan, John Russell.)

*TORCH SONG (*M.G.M.*) Joan Crawford, as a proud, lonely, ill-tempered musical comedy star, falls in love with a blind pianist. Crawford connoisseurs should not miss this one. (Michael Wilding; director, Charles Walters.)

*TROUBLE IN STORE (*G.F.D.*) Norman Wisdom's first screen comedy, in which he turns a department store upside down; the material might have been fresher. (Margaret Rutherford, Moira Lister; director, John Paddy Carstairs.)

**VACANCES DE M. HULOT, LES (*Films de France*) In his second film Jacques Tati disrupts the holiday peace of a little seaside town; mildly amusing or intensely funny, depending on one's reactions to this highly individual clown. *Reviewed.*

WINGS OF THE HAWK (*G.F.D.*) Adventures in Mexico; an American mining engineer joins the bandits. Technicolor, standard excitements and a good actor, Van Heflin, taking a commonplace part. The film was shot in 3-D but is being shown flat. (Julia Adams; director, Budd Boetticher.)

Last Year

1953 has been inevitably over-shadowed by considerations of the Hollywood film's future shape and dimensions. In the spring, 3-D arrived with *Bwana Devil*; later on West End cinemas unveiled the "New Wide Screen", the "Giant Full-Stage Screen", the "Giant Panoramic Screen" and the rest, and experimented tentatively and disconcertingly with stereophonic sound; and in November, 20th Century-Fox displayed *The Robe* (see pages 114 and 143) on the "Miracle Mirror" CinemaScope screen. Critics, meanwhile, have kept up an appeal for "good pictures in any dimensions"—an appeal which cannot but sound a little like the forlorn bleating of sheep abandoned in the middle of a battlefield. But when the mist clears, who knows what any of us is going to see? It seems too early to add to our previous speculations.



All the same, 1953, though by no means a vintage year, has been more encouraging than might at times have been expected. The film of the year, Bresson's austere, uncompromising and masterly *Le Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*, stands alone. The runners-up are divided among four nationalities; from America, George Stevens' *Shane*, the Houseman-Mankiewicz *Julius Caesar* and John Ford's *The Sun Shines Bright*; from France, Clair's *Belles-de-Nuit* and Clement's *Les Jeux Interdits* (an uneven film, but exceptionally impressive in the scenes between the two children); from Britain, Henry Cornelius' *Genevieve*, one of the brightest comedies of the year; from Italy, Castellani's *Due Soldi di Speranza* and Menotti's *The Medium* (the most successful stylistic experiment in filmed opera we have yet seen); and Renoir's Franco-Italian *Le Carrosse d'Or*.

After this, selection becomes more difficult, and more personal. But, for one reason or another, these films seem worth recording; Minnelli's gay and witty *The Band Wagon* (and, though to a lesser extent, his slickly professional Hollywood story, *The Bad and the Beautiful*), Charles Walters' gentle, engaging *Lili*, Daniel Mann's *Come Back, Little Sheba*, Hitchcock's *I Confess*, and the preposterous, authentically exciting *War of the Worlds*; from France, Ophüls' (over-) accomplished *Le Plaisir*; from Japan, the strange, attractive *The Impostor*; from Italy, Visconti's *Bellissima*; and from Britain, *Johnny on the Run*, a children's film of quite unusual distinction, and Basil Dearden's *The Square Ring*, a vigorously professional boxing picture.



Outstanding among some impressive performances were John Gielgud's superlative Cassius and Shirley Booth's pathetic, bedraggled housewife in *Come Back, Little Sheba*: to these we award unqualified Oscars. For the rest, there were the performances of Jean Arthur and Van Heflin in *Shane*; Marlon Brando's Antony; Magnani's playing in *Le Carrosse d'Or*; Trevor Howard's tense and troubled Scobie in *The Heart of the Matter*; Marie Powers' bravura display in *The Medium*; Ethel Waters' radiant performance as the old cook in *The Member of the Wedding*; and a reminder in *The Band Wagon* of Fred Astaire's undiminished grace and style. And one remembers the enjoyable way in which Bette Davis rampaged through an undistinguished picture, *The Star*. Of the less experienced players we single out Leslie Caron (*Lili*), Audrey Hepburn (*Roman Holiday*), Kenneth More (*Genevieve*) and—though he was notably ill at ease in *The Robe*—Richard Burton, for the vigorous screen personality revealed in two earlier films.



It has been an above-standard year for shorts and documentaries. *The Conquest of Everest* takes pride of place, as a film equal to its magnificent occasion. And programmes have been invigorated by *Crin Blanc*, *Images Medievales*, the Hungarian *Kingdom on the Waters*, Disney's *Water Birds*, the Canadian *Romance of Transportation*, *Sunday by the Sea*, the U.P.A. cartoons *Willie the Kid* and *Madeline* and—to show that U.P.A. still has a rival—the Tom and Jerry *Johann Mouse*. Also deserving of mention is *The Elstree Story*; a record, often fascinating, of the studio's history.



Among its revivals, the National Film Theatre has put on *The Navigator* and *The General* (Buster Keaton), *Anna Karenina* (Garbo), and series devoted to the early works of de Sica and of Hitchcock. And, for two days, it brought back Carné's *Le Jour se Lève*. Other interesting revivals have included *The Maltese Falcon*, *Pygmalion*, *Lazy Bones* and *Ivan the Terrible*; and *Time in the Sun*, edited by Marie Seton from the material shot by Eisenstein in Mexico, received its first public showing in London.



It should also be recorded that there was strong competition for 1953's most outlandish film: *Niagara*, *Bwana Devil*, *Intimate Relations*, *Stalag 17*, *Pick Up on South Street* and *Die Sunderin* all, in their various alarming ways, put forward convincing claims.

All in all, it was not a bad year for the flat film.



THE THIRD AUDIENCE

Orson Welles

Photo by "The Scotsman"

One of the events of last year's Edinburgh Festival was Orson Welles' lecture (given under the auspices of the British Film Institute's annual Summer Film School), in which he vigorously and lucidly surveyed the state of the industry, the artist's problems in finding a public, his own work in bringing Shakespeare to the screen, and such side issues as the advance of television and of the wide screen. It is not often that film-makers speak so stimulatingly and so much to the point.

In this reprint of Mr. Welles' lecture, the text has been slightly edited and, for convenience, points made in answer to questions have been included under the main headings.

On the Film Industry

Whenever film students, or film scholars, or anyone not actively concerned with the commercial world of film-making, invite someone like myself to give a lecture, they always talk about art. But we are business men. If I were a painter, I might have to starve for a while, but I would find paper or canvas or even a wall on which to express myself. Being a film-maker in the commercial world, and not in the documentary or avant-garde field, I need a million dollars to make a film. You have to be a business man to handle a million dollars. I remember sitting with Jean Cocteau and René Clair in a meeting of this sort, intensely serious, and we were regarded as being cynical because we refused to talk about anything but what films cost.

The invention of the moving picture was a moment of historic importance equivalent to the invention of movable type. Let us suppose that the business of publishing books was just beginning, and that, because the manufacture of movable type was so easy, an enormous industry

had just grown up. Then suppose that only two types of books could be published: little tiny ones that very few people would read or buy, and books like "Gone With the Wind". How many books would have been published, in fact, or would even have been written, if an author, in order to get a publisher to publish what he had written, had to assume the responsibility of addressing himself to an audience of sixty million people?

There is nothing wrong with popular art; some of the greatest artists in the world have been popular artists. But the trouble with films is that they cost too much. I am now acting in a film in London, made from a short story by Somerset Maugham. Knowing him to be a writer who works at the normal speed, it should have taken him no more than four half-days to write that story, but it will take five weeks of shooting to make that same story a film. Logically, it should not take any longer, or, at the very most, twice the time it took Maugham, but with hundreds of people clanking around a great set where the camera is so heavy it takes three people to move it, a faster and more economical method of work

becomes impossible. We are now all trapped by a standard of technical excellence, which we dare not fall below without being attacked by the whole system—from the distributor to the exhibitor, from the highbrow to the lowbrow critic, from everyone, in fact, except the public.

I think movies are dying, dying, dying. But I do not think they are going to stay dead for long. They are like the theatre; the theatre is dying all the time, but it never dies altogether. It is like the cycle of the seasons—it has its summer, autumn and winter. Now the movies are in the autumn of the cycle.

On the Film Public

For the first time in the history of the world, a creative artist is now given the opportunity to address sixty million people. The trouble is, it is not simply an opportunity, but an obligation—he *must* address them. The new artist goes out to Hollywood or Rome or wherever it may be, and until the industrialists grow wise to him, he may create something out of himself, something original. Then they grow wise to him, and make him feel responsible to the industry. In fact, he simply becomes a responsible man who does not like to steal from the people who are paying him.

So we have to find some ground between the experimental 16 mm. avant-garde—although that medium is important—and the commercial production—which is, anyway, dying from an economic point of view. If the Eady plan were taken away from the British film industry, if government aid were removed from the French, the Italian or the Spanish industries, they would collapse. India and Japan are the only two national film industries that are paying their way. What we need, in fact, is to hold a world congress to discuss the whole economics of film-making, and to study the public.

We talk much about the public, but the fact is that the film public is *petit bourgeois*. What the big commercial film is doing is to interpret for the lower middle classes what the upper middle classes liked yesterday. That is not snobbery—I am simply using terms of social reality. Another curious thing is that this film public has no shape.

If I were to play King John at the Edinburgh Festival, I would know the shape of my public; but a film is manufactured and then shipped out to a series of halls throughout the world into which a huge and amorphous public pours. Nobody really knows anything about it. It is made up of everybody, of kings and queens and cleaners and clerks. The best thing commercially, which is the worst artistically, by and large, is the most successful; and, that being the fact, how can we be surprised if the level of films goes down and down?

The creative film-maker may well wonder where he is going to find his public. He is generally faced with two choices; he can either make straightforward commercial films, films that the public can be expected to pay to see, or he can do exactly what he wants and be supported by his government. Neither alternative, on its own, is a good one. I reject state patronage to the exclusion of all other forms, but I think it is a very serious thing when a government gives no help. America needs a B.B.C. and Britain needs a C.B.S. If the cinema is to be a stable industry, it must be economically possible for a man to produce a film without going to his government, but, on the other

hand, he should be able to go to it if he wants to.

I would like a public and a film in which it is possible to exchange and communicate ideas and information. Certainly, in an educated world, there will be two hundred million people who will be bored to death by the most "difficult" film we make today, but as things stand only so many people will listen to Mozart. That is a limited public. It grows by what it feeds on. You must nourish that public, and you cannot do so with 16 mm. avant-garde films, because that is too far away from the general public to be an important source of expression for the film-maker.

The biggest mistake we have made is to consider that films are primarily a form of entertainment; they are only incidentally a form of entertainment. The film is the greatest medium since the invention of movable type for exchanging ideas and information, and it is no more at its best in light entertainment than literature is at its best in the light novel. This doesn't mean that the great public of today should be abandoned, but I think there should be other publics, smaller ones, and cosmopolitan ones, to see things forbidden by the code of Hollywood, the censors of the Vatican, and whatever the gentlemen in Britain are called. There must be a relatively free exchange of ideas. To achieve this, we have to find a way of making films—and here television may help us—by which, if two or three million people see them, we have a return for our money; which involves the creation of a true international audience, and a struggle with the mysterious national forces in the world which call themselves governments. But out of such a victory would come the raw material for a great new enterprise.

On Rome, Hollywood and Elsewhere

It is old-fashioned to blame Hollywood. We have seen Rome turn into a small Hollywood, and England try to do so and fall flat on its face. Hollywood has simply been the biggest and most productive film-making centre. It was a cosmopolitan place and it might have happened anywhere. It only happened in a suburb of Los Angeles because Cecil B. de Mille was prevented from moving on to Nevada by the snow.

The fact is that everything wrong with Hollywood is also there in Rome today. The Italian films, by the way, cost a great deal more than their publicity indicated. Rossellini is an extremely expensive director. The Italians did not make their films cheaply—it was simply that there was no way of their costing more. They should neither be praised nor blamed for this. Having always been a calligraphic people, they reacted against calligraphism after the war, and many of the results were called neo-realism by one side and bad movie-making by the other.

When I referred to England falling flat on its face, I did not mean artistically; I meant, by trying to industrialise its film business on such a scale. England is the only film industry without a tradition. They were making films in Stockholm, Budapest and Copenhagen forty years ago, but they were not making them in London. You walk into a studio in England today, and the number of people who have been in films for more than five years is hardly enough to push a camera.

On the Wide Screen

When someone asked Cocteau what he thought of the

wide screen, he said: "*The next poem I write, I am going to get a big sheet of paper.*" We must stop thinking in terms of technique. I do not think the film public deserves anything bigger or better than it has got already. Films are big enough for a while. One of the biggest distributors in England, an intelligent and talented man, recently ran in a popular provincial theatre the film, *The War of the Worlds*; and he installed for that week a large screen, although there was no mention of this fact in his publicity. Afterwards he conducted a poll among the audience, and not one member of it, not one person who visited the theatre during that week, knew that it was a wide screen.

On Filming Shakespeare

I am not necessarily in favour of putting Shakespeare on the screen. I do not know whether a happy marriage can exist between Shakespeare and the screen, and I certainly know that I did not succeed in making one. But in this age, there are many questions which cannot be discussed in front of sixty million people, and that is the audience a present-day film-maker is required to aim at. One method of getting away from banality is to return to our classics, and it is for this reason one sees film-makers experimenting with Shakespeare, some disastrously, and some otherwise.

Macbeth was made in twenty-three days, including one day of retakes. People who know anything at all about the business of making a film will realise that this is more than fast. My purpose in making *Macbeth* was not to make a great film—and this is unusual, because I think that every film director, even when he is making nonsense, should have as his purpose the making of a great film. I never thought I was making a great film, or even an imitation great film. I thought I was making what might be a good film, and what, if the 23-day shooting schedule came off, might encourage other film-makers to tackle difficult subjects at greater speed.

Unfortunately, not one critic in any part of the world chose to compliment me on the speed. They thought it a scandal that it should take only twenty-three days. Of course they were right, but I could not write to every one of them and explain that no one would give me any money for a further day's shooting. I believe that we have got to find in films an equivalent for the repertory theatre in spoken drama. The experiment in America failed because it was judged on the same level, and distributed in the same way, as the work that took four months to make. However, I am not ashamed of the limitations in the picture.

Othello took not twenty-three days but four years to make. It did not, however, take four years to shoot. Actually, its shooting period was about the normal one, but there were times when it was necessary to disband the unit, because I had to go away and act elsewhere. *Macbeth*, for better or worse, is a kind of violently sketched charcoal drawing of a great play. *Othello*, whether successful or not, is about as close to Shakespeare's play as was Verdi's opera. I think Verdi and Boito were perfectly entitled to change Shakespeare in

adapting him to another art form; and, assuming that the film is an art form, I took the line that you can adapt a classic freely and vigorously for the cinema.

On Films and Television

The technical excellence of the images in that Punch and Judy set, television, is about as bad as a picture of a Chinese play, in which someone brings on a chair and tells you it is a mountain. Yet the public is sufficiently held by that. In fact, one of the hopes of the movies is television, and not just television as a means of diffusing movies. The lightness and ease of some television productions contain a lesson for film-makers to learn again. Television is an exciting thing because it is in the hands of the first generation. Films have not exhausted their technical and artistic possibilities, but the majority of movie-makers today belong to the second generation, and they are ashamed of the first generation.

It is rather as if we had just left a period of Elizabethan eloquence and entered a more cautious, lyrical and decadent period. The possibilities of the Elizabethan period were no more exhausted than the possibilities of the language were exhausted; it was just that people became afraid of the richness of the language. You can still do anything with films, and television is not a substitute for them. Eventually it may become a means of distributing them, but it will never give the director the scope that the film camera can give him. Television is an actor's medium. It is going to reduce the director to something like his position in the theatre. But the great power of the film, the use of the image as such, will always belong to the cinema.



Photo by "The Scottish Daily Express"

REPORT ON THE "X"



It is now nearly three years since the "X" certificate was introduced by the British Board of Film Censors. Like most censorship innovations, liberal or otherwise, it has aroused a certain amount of controversy; and there still seems to be some doubt in the public mind as to what purpose it fulfils—there have been times when "X" appeared in danger of becoming a popular synonym for sensational. This Report is concerned with the working of a censorship category reserved for films "wholly adult in theme or treatment".

The introduction of the "X" certificate (replacing, among other things, the "H" category, which had excluded children under 16 from films regarded specifically as horrific) was included among the recommendations of the Report of the Departmental Committee on Children and the Cinema. It was supported in October, 1950, by the Secretary of the British Board of Film Censors, Mr. Arthur Watkins, who said that "grown up cinemagoers are having their intelligence sacrificed for the sake of the youngsters, whom we cannot keep out", and referred to the "X" as a measure "which will enable us to pass unquestionably adult films, instead of having to refuse a certificate". And it brought to an end a brief period of some confusion; during 1950, the Board had refused certificates to certain "adult" films—*Manon, Occupe toi d'Amélie, The Miracle*—which had later been licensed by the L.C.C. for showing, to adults, within its area; and the Board had itself anticipated the new category by giving *The Snakepit* (after some minor cuts) a special Adults Only certificate.

It was announced that films regarded as "wholly adult in theme or treatment" would come into the "X" category, and early in 1952 the B.B.F.C. further defined its intentions:

"The experience gained by the Board in recent years would suggest that some new films may have to be graded 'X' on account of realistic treatment or a sordid theme; but it is not the wish or intention of the Board to open the door to any undesirable type of film which is merely designed to attract morbid curiosity. On the contrary, the Board greatly hopes that the new category will provide an appropriate place for adult films of high quality, serious or light in nature, which, though unsuitable for children, make a legitimate appeal to their parents".

In practice, the new certificate has applied only to a small minority of films—perhaps to something under four per cent of all feature films shown in Britain since it was introduced. The "X" features shown to date have been as follows:—

U.S.A.: *The Sound of Fury, M, Murder Inc., Detective Story,*

Lock Your Doors, Outrage, Quo Vadis, A Streetcar Named Desire, The Well, The Big Night, Death of a Salesman, The Thing from Another World, Captive Wild Woman, Family Story, Without Warning, The Case of the Missing Brides, The Sniper, War of the Worlds, House of Wax, Invasion U.S.A., Beware My Lovely, The Hitch-Hiker, The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms, Life After Dark, Bob and Sally, Buried Alive, Corpse Vanished, Dead Men Walk, I The Jury, The Mad Monster, Street Corner.*

France: *Manon,† Occupe toi d'Amélie,† Traffic in Souls, Passionelle, La Vie Commence Demain, Manèges, La Ronde, L'Ingenue Libertine, Clochemerle, Justice est Faite, Garçon Sauvage, Caroline Chérie, Olivia, Casque d'Or, Dedée, Les Enfants Terribles, Souvenirs Perdus, Jeux Interdits, Le Plaisir, Adorables Créatures, Quai de Grenelle, Nous Sommes Tous des Assassins, Coiffeur pour Dames, Amok, La Ferme du Pendu.*

France/Italy: *Les Sept Péchés Capitaux.*

Italy: *The Miracle,† Donne senza Nome, Behind Closed Shutters, Tre Storie Proibite, The Medium, Last Meeting.*

Great Britain: *Women of Twilight, The Yellow Balloon,* Cosh Boy, Intimate Relations.*

Germany: *Tromba,* Wozzeck, Die Sunderin.*

Mexico: *Los Olvidados.*

Japan: *Rashomon.*

Poland: *The Last Stage.*

Of these seventy-three films, about a third can fairly be described as being "adult" both in theme and treatment; another seven or eight qualify as being adult in theme, although scarcely so in their treatment of it. Of the remainder, a fair proportion of the American films (*Captive Wild Woman, The Case of the Missing Brides, The Thing, House of Wax, The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*, etc.) would probably previously have been absorbed into the "H" category, while others such as *Murder Inc., The Big Night, The Sniper, Beware My Lovely* and *The Yellow Balloon* are simply thrillers and melodramas of a more than usually violent and savage type. And, mainly from

* Films now in the "A" category.

† These films had previously been licensed by the L.C.C. for showing to adults.

France and Italy, there has been a certain amount of what may, not unfairly, be called sex and sensationalism: *Traffic in Souls* (the white slave traffic), *Caroline Cherie* (a French *Forever Amber*), *Behind Closed Shutters* (prostitution), *Quai de Grenelle* (sex and murder), *Tre Storie Proibite* (rape, drugs, etc.), and *Tromba* (drug-taking by a tiger tamer) have been among the more dubious films to benefit from the "X" certificate.

It can be assumed that, in the pre-"X" days, relatively few of the seventy-odd films would have been banned outright. *Les Parents Terribles*, for instance, received an "A" certificate before the "X" category existed; the British remake, *Intimate Relations*, is an "X" film. It seems reasonable to conjecture that, had the Board been able, it would have placed Cocteau's film in the "X" class and that, conversely, it would not have banned *Intimate Relations*.

But on the positive side, as a piece of minority legislation, and one liberal in intention, the certificate can certainly be said to have justified its existence. *La Vie Commence Demain*, *La Ronde*,[‡] *Olivia*, *Casque d'Or*, *Nous sommes tous des Assassins*, *Los Olvidados*, *Rashomon*,[‡] *Le Plaisir*[‡] and *Jeux Interdits*[‡] are among the high-calibre pictures which the Board might well have found difficulty in passing under the old regime.

Although never actually stated, it was fairly widely assumed in the early days of the "X" certificate that films which would previously have been cut to meet censorship requirements would now be shown intact. But the Board made its policy clear in two statements:

"The Board has no written code which prescribes the subjects which it finds necessary to eliminate from all films, *that is even from 'X' films* (our italics). . . . Broadly speaking, the Board's aim is to exclude from public exhibition anything likely to impair the moral standards of the public, by extenuating vice or crime or by depreciating social standards, and anything likely to give offence to any reasonably-minded members of the audience".

And the Board "will do its best to ensure that 'X' films are free from any matter likely to cause offence to the majority of reasonable people".

How this policy works in practice, must obviously depend on how the Board defines "reasonable people". In fact, a considerable number of the "X" films have been cut, sometimes losing only a few shots, sometimes five or more minutes. Among them are *M*, *The Sniper*, *Caroline Cherie* (all heavily cut), *House of Wax*, *L'Ingenue Libertine*, *Nous sommes tous des Assassins*, *Behind Closed Shutters* and *Die Sunderin*. Specifically, *Tre Storie Proibite* lost some details from the drug-taking scenes; the kiss at the fancy dress ball was removed from *Olivia*; a shot in the guillotine sequence from *Casque d'Or*; a detail of violence, in the scene in which Jaibo murders a boy by hitting him with a rock, from *Los Olvidados*; and the moment at which Dalio stubs out his cigarette on Simone Signoret's breast from *Dedée*. (In *La Minute de Verité*, incidentally, Michele Morgan is permitted to stub out *her* cigarette on the bare back of a woman of whom she is jealous.) Recently, too, the Board refused a certificate to Eisenstein's *Time in the Sun*, unless cuts were made which the distributors regarded as damaging to the film; the distributors, however, later obtained an L.C.C. licence to show the film, in its entirety, to adult audiences.

This policy has led, inevitably, to a certain amount of

criticism. There exists undoubtedly a school of thought which holds that the "X" category should provide censorship enough—that the purpose of censorship is to safeguard children rather than adults and that, provided that children are excluded from the cinema, and provided the film is regarded as suitable for exhibition at all, it should not be subjected to cuts in detail. It can be argued that the removal of isolated instances of violence from such films as *Casque d'Or* and *Los Olvidados* may well prove damaging to the picture, while it is scarcely likely seriously to affect the film's total impact on the hypothetical "reasonably minded" member of the audience. The *Time in the Sun* case may seem to support this point of view.

No one, however, would probably seriously question the rightness of the Board's attitude in removing cheaply offensive material from cheaply offensive pictures, or in refusing a certificate altogether. But the British censor, fortunately, is not bound by the rules of a Production Code; having no rigidly defined policy as to what may and what may not be shown on the screen, he is able to use his discretion. The effect on the audience of an episode of violence in, say, *Los Olvidados* is very different from that of the savage beatings-up in the conventionally brutal American thriller. The Board, on its own admission, accepts the distinction between sensationalism and the "adult" film; it appears, however, that it is unable or unwilling to go to the logical conclusion of leaving "adult" films uncut altogether.

One reason for this is, of course, that the B.B.F.C. could find itself at the mercy of certain sections both of the industry and of the Press. As a general rule, the three main circuits have tended to book "X" films only on rare occasions; the traditional "family audience" is considered too valuable to be sacrificed. In a leading article during 1952, the *Kinematograph Weekly* expressed the industry's point of view when it said:

"So far as the 'X' certificate is concerned, it can be considered, with few exceptions, the segregation of a film to specialised booking".

But certain cinema managers have notoriously placarded their theatres with lurid advertisements, a few distributors have employed deliberately (often misleadingly) sensational posters and publicity material, and some members of the Press, including one or two critics, have implied that the "X" label is exclusively attached to the sensational film. There was, too, "the Xiest show in town"—not, incidentally, a film. That the letter "X" was chosen for the new category was in itself surely an unnecessary gift to the exploiters.

Inevitably, this repeated commercial emphasis on sex and violence has resulted in certain doubts in the public mind about the value of the certificate itself. It seems symptomatic of this that several local authorities have recently exercised their authority to ban an "X" film. On one occasion, according to the trade press, they have not even troubled to see the film in question. In August of last year, Mr. Watkins said, "*If the exploitation of the 'X' category by irresponsible members of the industry goes on, then the time may come for a review of the whole position, obviously by the appropriate body, which is the Cinema Consultative Committee*". He stressed that there was no question of scrapping the "X" altogether (as had been suggested in a *Daily Sketch* article) but was

[‡] Passed without any censorship cuts.

(Continued on page 153)

THE FILMS OF LUIS BUNUEL

Tony Richardson

The cinema's prophets are few and lonely; none more formidable than the Spaniard, Bunuel.

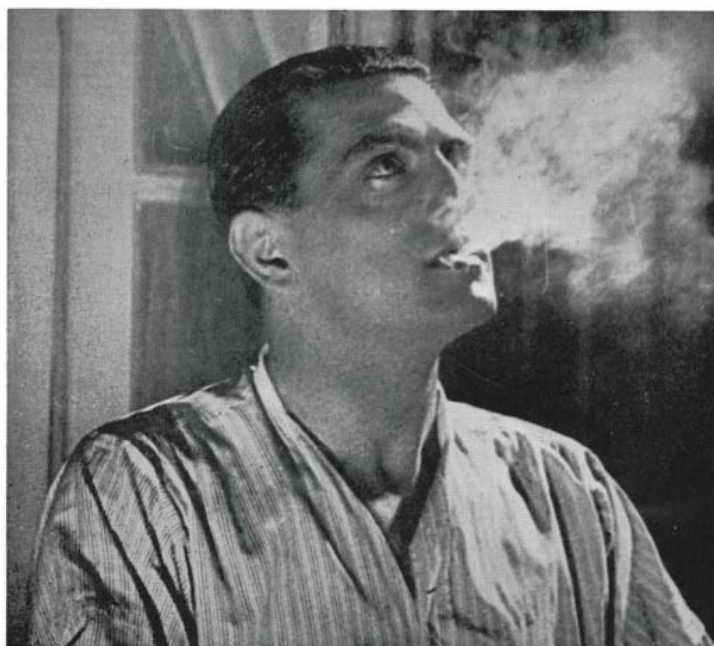
Luis Bunuel was born in 1900 at Calanda in Aragon, of well-to-do parents. He was educated at the University of Madrid as a scientist and became, for a time, assistant to the great neurologist Ramon y Cajal. Later he was sent by the Spanish Government to Paris as scientific attaché to the League of Nations. Apocryphally, his school-friend Garcia Lorca, the poet, was the first to turn Bunuel's interest away from the football field to the arts, but it was not until he became absorbed in the life of mid-'twenties Paris that this interest was to be fulfilled.

Artistically, Paris was then in the lively and muddy spate of Surrealism. "La Revolution Surréaliste" was on the bookstalls; Ernst, Breton, Arp, Man Ray, Miro, Tanguy, di Chirico, Picasso and Salvador Dali were writing and exhibiting. Bunuel became friends with Dali, and by him was persuaded to collaborate in the making of a film, *Un Chien Andalou*. Surrealists such as Man Ray had already experimented with the possibilities of film, and the general artistic licence had enabled other artists, like Clair, to use surrealism for their own ends. But, in general, most of the avant-garde films of the time now seem tame and set, with the clichés of art tailored to theory. To see *Un Chien Andalou* in their context is to see first the conventionality of the theoretical approach that produced it, then, sharply, the force and passion of its makers.

Opening with a sensational sequence of a razor slicing a young girl's eye, "to shock the audience into free association", the film explores the relationship between violence and sexuality, and the consequences of the moral constraints of society. In their creation of an autonomous world, the makers claimed to reject any elements that could be fitted into any recognisable conscious pattern: inevitably, they did not succeed. Narrative lines tentatively emerge; symbolism (text-books changing into pistols) is sometimes overt; the laboured desire to outrage constantly obtrudes. The images of protest and revolt—a man trying to rape a girl is yoked to two "frères des écoles chrétiennes" and to two grand pianos on which are dead asses—now seem brashly naïve. Only in one scene, as a couple watch an accident in the street below, is there an indication of the later Bunuel, who was to use the freedom of surrealism to expose and penetrate reality.

Bunuel himself says that the collaboration with Dali was complete in this film: it is impossible to speculate on which elements are whose. The differences are to be found rather in the attitude to the various images than in particular contributions. M. Ado Kyrrou, in his lively, militant *Le Surréalisme au Cinéma* comments on the piano sequence:

"Dali voit une image-scandale, une composition bien agencée, tandis que Bunuel voit une image-choc, une



Bunuel in "Un Chien Andalou."

composition révélatrice. Pour Dali, qui a toujours prétendu n'accorder aucun intérêt à toute question sociale, le scandale est un moyen de publicité; pour Bunuel, le scandale est un acte révolutionnaire."

Despite the credits, their collaboration was to end after only a few days' work on the script of their next project, *L'Age d'Or*. In this film Bunuel came of age.

II

By its first sequence, a brusque documentary account of scorpions, the film asks to be accepted as fact rather than as fiction. In style and subject this sequence symbolises the theme of the film. Among the rocks where the scorpions are found are a band of cut-throat beggars, hideous, blind and maimed, planning to attack the descent of civilisation on their territory in the form of robed and mitred bishops, consecrating the bitter crags. But, weak and exhausted, they die before they can reach the priests; and civilisation, complete in top hats and frock coats, in cassocks and nuns' habits, has arrived to lay the foundation stone of a new city—imperial Rome. The mayor's official speech is interrupted by cries of violent love-making. Bunuel now introduces his main theme, the conflict of love with the moral and conventional pressures of society. The lovers are separated by force, but later meet at a fashionable music party where, after delay and subterfuge, they again begin to make love, only to be interrupted when an imperturbable butler calls Modot, the hero, to the telephone. The girl is left alone to satisfy her desire on the big toe of a statue in the garden. On the telephone, the president of Modot's country (he is a diplomat) accuses him, by neglect of his duties, of starting a revolution. Clouded by guilt, he returns to the girl; but he attracts her no longer and she leaves him for the old, flabby, bearded conductor of the orchestra. At the same time, the survivors of the debauch at de Sade's Château de Selliny leave the castle. Symbol both of what love has become and by whom it has become what it is, the old, poxed, gouty roués are led by Christ.

Surrealism is born out of despair; its only power is to hasten the general cataclysm by its own prophetic chaos.



"L'Age d'Or." The angry hero (Gaston Modot), deserted by the girl, begins to bundle objects out of the window. "Violence turned to joke. . . ."

Max Ernst said of it, "*In turning topsy-turvy the appearances and relationships of reality, surrealism has been able, with a smile on its lips, to hasten the general crisis of consciousness which must perforce take place in our time.*" No other work of the period expressed this so completely as *L'Age d'Or*. All civilisation is oppression, suffering, frustration; above, the cynical emptiness and callous show of the rich; below, the misery, hunger and incipient revolution of the poor; individuals are ridden with inhibition, anxiety and guilt; beauty is, like Hans Schwitters' haphazard, delicate collages of tram tickets and paper money, the momentary chance of an afternoon's boredom—clouds pass in the mirror as the girl, restless and lonely, waits for Modot's arrival. Bunuel has taken a traditional romantic theme, love thwarted by circumstance, and seen it with "un œil à l'état sauvage", stripped of any sentimental associations; love is a fierce lust with clumsy embraces and frustrated satisfaction. The honesty of his attitude is explosive and cauterising.

Yet it is not despair that finally pervades the film but a savage glee, almost optimistic in destruction. In a world where Marcel Schwob predicted "Le rire est probablement destiné à disparaître", surrealism answered disintegration with its own laughter. When Modot is deserted by the girl, he bundles out of a window, in fury, a burning plough, an enormous pine, a bishop, a toy giraffe. This same lusty and joyous iconoclasm gives unity to the film and binds the coda (which at first seems superfluous) to the main theme. It springs partly from a young man's desire to shock and outrage, partly from the ironic tradition of the picaresque; violence turned to joke. After a subtitle, "Parfois le dimanche", buildings explode and collapse; a tumbril is driven through a fashionable party; and a maid rushes in, faints, as flames leap out of a doorway behind her, while the guests unconcernedly chatter on. Surrealism gave Bunuel power to denounce but also, like Clair, freedom to romp.

But, though the props are still surrealist—the man with

"patches" of living flies, the cow on the bed—and the general form loose and episodic, there are indications that Bunuel had exhausted the surrealist approach and had already begun to shape events into drama. Surrealism had become a technique for exposing and analysing reality rather than a means of creating an independent world of fantasy. Its freedom had, too, as M. Kyrö points out, given him the means to introduce technical innovations, such as his use of the "monologue intérieure" and the brilliant sound montage, that were startling for his time. But he was to abandon surrealism completely in his next film, *Land Without Bread* (1932).

III

Land Without Bread is a documentary of the mountain district, Las Hurdes, in Northern Spain. Reality here surpasses the bitterest nightmares of surrealism. The land is barren and infertile; for two months the whole population live on nothing but unripe cherries; their bodies and necks are swollen with monstrous goitres; their crowded homes are bare, squalid, crumbling; children lie dead and abandoned in the gutters; there are idiots and morons everywhere; at night the crier tolls for those who have died of plague and typhus. Whatever slight alleviation there might be is destroyed by the peasants' ignorance and superstition. They are often bitten by vipers, whose bite is not mortal, but is made so by a herb they rub into the wound. Their miserable agriculture lacks tools and method, and effort is crippled by disease and apathy.

All this Bunuel records with a flatness and lack of comment that make it the more alarming. No moral is drawn, no response instructed, no easy attitude given. Bunuel is content, as was Goya in *Los Desastres de la Guerra*, to let the naked record speak for itself. In one sequence only, where bees attack a dying ass, is there any element of his old sensationalism. Though the material is organised with masterly skill, the very conception of "art" here seems irrelevant. It is the most profoundly disturbing film I have ever seen.

After *Land Without Bread*, Bunuel was brought to Hollywood at Chaplin's instigation, but none of the projects he worked on proved acceptable. He returned to Spain and produced a number of commercial films, and during the Civil War he was sent to the Republican Embassy in Paris. Afterwards, he went to America again, where he worked for some time at the Museum of Modern Art: he was asked to leave when it was discovered that he had made *L'Age d'Or*. Then he worked in Hollywood on the dubbing of Spanish films, until in 1947 he went to Mexico with a vague plan concerning a film version of Lorca's *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*. This fell through, but he made one commercial film before, in 1950, he directed what is perhaps his greatest work, *Los Olvidados*.

IV

In *L'Age d'Or*, Bunuel had begun to create dramatic action; in *Land Without Bread* he had approached reality directly; *Los Olvidados* was the fulfilment of both these developments. This intense dramatic vision sees the story of a group of delinquent boys living on the outskirts of Mexico City in the terms of Blake's "Innocence and Experience". Everyone in the film, so concentrated in its logic, is set at some place in that scale. At the one end is the pathetic Indian boy, Ochitos; at the other, the brutal, lecherous blind beggar and the cruel, embittered Jaibo, leader of the gang, between them is Pedro, the innocent twisted and brutalised by Experience.

As in all Bunuel's films, the treatment is conceptual. The characters are simplified to whatever aspect or passion Bunuel is creating, and all irrelevant traits are suppressed. The unique force of the film comes from the combination of austerity and strictness in conception with a startling, often ironic, poetry of expression, with its images of donkeys, black hens, doves that can cure fever, cripples, torn meat, pariah dogs, in an almost timeless setting of arid squalor. The images underscore the logic. Pedro at first guards tenderly his pet hen with its brood of chickens; later, he savagely beats a pullet to death. The prophecies and thunderings of *L'Age d'Or* have become fact, the horrors actual, the vision immensely darkened.

All the characters have to struggle to scrape a living from the misery and poverty of their surroundings; Jaibo's gang batter a boy to death, drag a legless man from his cart, bait and stone the blind musician, who, in turn, bullies the patient Ochitos and tries to rape the young girl, Meche. They live in hate and fear of each other, their only contact savage, brutish matings, out of which the unwanted Pedros are born, and the city has new dangers and vices. Perhaps only Goya has created horror so acute. Bunuel's vision is too uncompromising to permit any softening of its bestiality; but—and one cannot say this emphatically enough, in view of what many critics have written—he never uses horror inartistically. There is no sensationalism in the handling of violence in this film; terror is balanced by pity, hopelessness by humanity. And throughout there is a strong, warm delight in any momentary respite from suffering—the little girl entranced on the carousel, Meche pathetically bathing her face in milk to soften her skin—and a pity that can encompass not only the helpless Ochitos but Pedro's selfish, callous mother. Toughened and dulled by the appalling savagery

of her existence, she neglects Pedro, is easily seduced by Jaibo, but, alone of Bunuel's characters, she is allowed a moment of consciousness. Compelled by the authorities, she goes to see Pedro in jail. He has become a vicious, desperate animal, love turned to resentment and hate. As she begins to reproach him, she understands suddenly her own responsibility for what he has become; impulsively she wants to comfort him, to ask forgiveness. Pedro shrinks from her. There is nothing to be done, nothing to be said. She turns and walks out of the room. If one defines tragedy as "the balance and reconciliation of discordant and opposite qualities", it is the word for *Los Olvidados*.

V

Those who can find only harshness and violence in Bunuel's work should see *Subida al Cielo* (1952), with which he followed two commercial films, *Susana* and *La Hija del Engano*. Written by the Spanish poet Manuel Altolaguirre, and set in an Indian village in the Mexican jungle, this is a feckless poetic comedy, whose mixture of folklore and fantasy is similar to Lorca's *Don Perlimperlin*. The plot is simple; Oliverio, about to be married, has to break off the ceremony as his mother is dying; to respect her wishes, he must get her will ratified by a lawyer, and it is the two-day bus journey that this entails, with its adventures and delays, that forms the substance of the film. The bus is stranded in a storm; it gets stuck in a river; a woman has a premature delivery; the party stop at the driver's home to celebrate his birthday; and, besides these distractions, Oliverio is pursued by the local tart (splendidly incarnated by Lilia Prado). His mental conflicts are deliciously portrayed in a jaunty dream sequence in which, while his mother mounted on a pedestal unconcernedly knits, Oliverio dumps his wife in a river and is drawn along an immense umbilical cord to the tart, in a bus transformed to a lusciously romantic patch of jungle. Eventually, goaded as much by irritation as by desire, he sleeps with the girl, during a torrential storm, on the top of the mountain, *Subida al Cielo*. He returns to find his mother dead, but by pressing her thumbs on to the document he is able to secure the distribution of property she had wished.



"Land Without Bread."



"Subida al Cielo": the bus founders in the river, but the rapacious doxy (Lilia Prado) keeps on the trail.

In itself the idea for the film is contrived, and the characters—the chirpy cripple, the respectable, prim Spaniard, the opinionated politician—are stock types. But Bunuel has given it a wonderfully poetic cast. From the first moment when the lovers, in a flower-wreathed canoe, embark for their honeymoon island, the film is impregnated with a rich sensuousness. The births, the loves, the deaths of the people underlie the farcical comedy, the journey mirroring the rhythm of life. Towards the end of the film, there is an exquisite change of key from the noisy gaiety of the beginning. When the bus half sinks in the river, all efforts to extricate it with oxen and tractor fail, and the tractor itself flounders. While the passengers try to rescue it, the farmer's daughter, a wise, wide-eyed tot, casually leads the oxen and the bus out of the water. By the time the bus returns, she has died from a snake-bite, and the whole party attend her funeral; this mood is sustained by the death of the mother; and Oliverio and his wife, matured by their grief, stand hand in hand gazing out over the dark sea.

Yet, if these deeper complexities inform the film, the prevailing mood is one of happiness. Bunuel parodies himself in the dream sequence; the cripple jokes about his peg-leg; and the descent of the American Tourists, the Shriners' Convention, self-consciously speaking bad Spanish to each other and doggedly trying to buy an *old* sombrero, is satirised gently and without malice. Bunuel himself has praised *The Treasure of Sierra Madre* for putting Mexico so truly on the screen. This may be true of the deserts and the bitter traditions of the hacienda, but the other Mexico of the tropics, with its rich fruitfulness and lazy Indians, has never been so spontaneously and so poetically caught as in this enchanting film.

Two more commercial films, which I have not seen, followed: *Una Mujer Sin Amor* and *El Bruto*. Bunuel describes them as uninteresting, though the stills of the

latter, with black cockerels and seduction among the carcasses hanging in a butcher's shop, look characteristic, and a poster has the intriguing description "fascinatingly bestial".

VI

Bunuel's next film, *El* (1953), is a complete contrast in mood; uneasy, wintry, keen. The story of a paranoiac, it seems, in tone and in its upper middle-class setting, a return to *L'Age d'Or*. El (Arturo de Cordova) falls in love with his friend's fiancée (Delia Garcés) and violently pursues her. Half-fascinated, half-repelled, she agrees to marry him; after the wedding, he becomes jealous to the point of insanity over every trifle. She confides in her mother, her priest, her ex-fiancé, but they discount her stories; these confidences enrage him even more, and he attempts to kill her. She leaves him and he, after complete breakdown, enters a monastery.

Relentlessly Bunuel watches, as if it were a snake, the paranoia unwind its fascinating coils; he gloats in the incidental comedy of its writhings (as when Cordova jabs a knitting-needle into a key-hole through which he imagines someone to be spying). Sometimes, though, one feels that Bunuel himself twists the tail of the snake to produce fascinating wriggles for their own sake. This is accentuated by the inadequacy of the players, neither of whose personalities are interesting enough to encompass the range and subtlety of characterisation demanded. But the failure lies deeper. The conventional, commonplace script has only been partly assimilated by Bunuel. The ruthlessness of his study of the paranoiac sits uneasily with the elements of comedy-of-situation in the script: it called, perhaps, for the hand of a Sturges. There are signs, too, of production difficulties and confusions in narration.

Bunuel's personality is most evident in the blasting anti-Catholicism of the film—a subject to which he always

reacts in his grandest, most authoritative manner. The paranoiac is portrayed as deeply religious, and it is at a ceremony for the initiation of young priests, at which he is a lay official, that he first sees the girl. This magnificent sequence presents the heavy, oppressively ornamented setting, the strain on the blanched faces of the boys, the weary ritual of the bishop, and Cordova's desperate attempt to keep his attention on the solemnity of the occasion while, despite himself, it wanders on to the legs of the spectators. The climax of the film provides a further opportunity. Cordova, desperate and exhausted, has gone into a church; in a rapidly mounting cross-cutting sequence all the congregation, the altar boy, the priest himself, seem to him to be cat-calling, pulling faces, thumbing noses.

VII

The choice of *Robinson Crusoe* for Bunuel's next film would seem unpromising dramatically, temperamentally alien; and realism—Defoe's humdrum and moralising, Bunuel's charged and poetic—a word to separate rather than associate them. The film is as remarkable in its fidelity to Defoe as in its transmutation. After establishing the situation in a few sparse images, Bunuel follows Defoe's story-line, through Crusoe's working out of a way of life for himself, the descent of the cannibals, the rescue of Friday, the arrival of the mutineers, his outwitting of them and his final departure from the island. In style, too, Bunuel has matched Defoe's plain, direct prose; the simplicity of *Land Without Bread* is here used for an artistic purpose. Bunuel saw, as did Defoe, that Crusoe's struggle, often clumsy and inept, against conditions on the island, was fascinating on its practical, pedestrian level; he records, simply, the flat, absorbing routine of Crusoe's daily life.

Imaginatively Bunuel pierces further, looking into the heart of the man to see there the desolation and anguish of someone isolated from all human contact. Soon after his arrival, Crusoe gets drunk and imagines he hears the laughter and songs of his former companions. From an intimate close-up, the camera suddenly tracks back, as his head begins to clear, to reveal him alone in the great cave. The torment is above all sexual. Crusoe sees a woman's figure in a scare-crow momentarily billowing in a gust of wind. The sight of his dog dragging a woman's dress from a trunk inflames him with desire; determined to control himself, he rushes to a huge cliff to shout the 49th psalm. He breaks in the effort, sobbing "soul, soul, soul" in an agony that is close to insanity. This forms the climax to the first part of the film, built rhythmically from the contrast between the steady calm of Crusoe's everyday life and the passions that are lacerating him. (Both contrast and climax have now been weakened and practically destroyed by heavy front-office cutting.) From this point, Crusoe degenerates into a form of madness, subtly traced in all its gradations both by Bunuel and in Dan O'Herlihy's conscientious performance. Careless of his appearance, neglectful of his home and animals, he becomes a wayward, crazed old man, trotting along the shore under his huge goatskin umbrella, gibbering into his matted beard. Like all great dramatic poets, Bunuel has created out of a character motivated with strict psychological accuracy an immense and powerful symbol of

our own times.

After the rescue of Friday, Crusoe, despite his longing for human companionship, can no longer adapt himself to another person. The first scenes between the two are gloriously funny. Crusoe's behaviour is a mixture of pomposity, patronage—and fear. On the one hand, he tries to instruct Friday in the manners of his old bourgeois life (this has been brilliantly established in a dream sequence in which, while Crusoe is ill with fever, he sees his respectable old father, wearing an enormous red hat, warning him to be content with "the middle station in life", and not to go to sea). On the other hand, he lies awake at night with a gun in his hand watching for Friday, and finally in terror chains him. Only when he learns to trust Friday's affection does he return from his obsession and isolation to a new sanity. This is reflected poetically in the surface of normal life. At first the animals (always Bunuel's favourite images) had been of almost human significance to Crusoe; then they were ignored, kept for use alone; now the whole stockade becomes pastoral, abounding in bright macaws, parrots, playful coatis. Man and environment (the film was shot in the soft green jungle of Manzanillo, north of Acapulco, and the Technicolor has great delicacy) are in harmony. The film is rounded off by the excitingly handled sequence of the capture of the mutineers, and the moral is made explicit. It is a mature and beautiful work.

VIII

Most of the artists who have made the film expressive of their unique personal visions have, at least, for a time, by fluke or fashion, found some place within the frame-



"El": climax of jealousy. Arturo de Cordova and Delia Garcés.

work of the industry. It seems, somehow, fittingly ironic that Bunuel should have found one in Mexico City, isolated within isolation, in an industry pouring out its lush, Latin-American products and helping by its prosperity to support a heartless, cosmopolitan capital. To see Bunuel in any artistic context, one must look beyond the cinema to the piercing, insolent seers of his own nation, to Goya, El Greco, the Picasso of Guernica. Without honour in his own country, he is a Spaniard first and last. How his vision will alter is difficult to foresee. Perhaps, as with Goya or the Mexican Orocozo, it will become crueller, less supportable; but in all his later films there are signs of a new resolution, a calmer, though not less clear-eyed, wisdom. Pedro can at least turn on Jaibo; Oliverio and his wife reach a truer understanding; Crusoe returns to sanity and fellowship. It is not that Bunuel's view of the world has changed—suffering, struggle, disease and pain are as fierce as ever—but his belief in men seems greater; and, in that belief, prophecy and revolt have given way to understanding and acceptance.

IX

The moment when a myth is made flesh is always unimaginable. I had heard the stories, of the terror in airplanes, the wild drinking, the smashing of dishes he had cooked, in fury at the late arrival of guests, the horror film shows organised at the Museum of Modern Art. The setting of our first meeting, the offices of Ultramar Films in Mexico City, could not have been more different. They are at the end of the Avenida de la Reforma, Maximilian's great boulevard. At the cinema next door, *El* had just opened. Inside, in a large central office partitioned with open desks and lined with pearl glass offices, hippy secretaries giggled over a box of marshmallows, and thin young men with slickly pressed suits and plastered hair joked in passing. The outer door opened again and Bunuel came, or rather burst, in: loose jacket, uncreased trousers, shaggy woollen open-necked shirt, middle height, broad, muscular, a square and deeply lined face, huge dark eyes. He was sorry he was late, he could only stay a moment.

"*Je m'excuse, on est en grève au studios depuis six semaines . . . there is a strike, perhaps you have heard, I am . . . I do not know how to say it . . . je suis en piquet de grève*".

We had only talked a few moments, but my image was already firm and strong; of an immense authority, too sure of itself to need the backing of formality; of a deep austerity and endurance that in no way braked immediate warmth and spontaneous response. This contradiction, the suggestion of a capacity both for riot and for discipline, was the most emphatic of my impressions.

Later we met and talked. Though he was out of practice, Bunuel speaks English well, only occasionally pausing for a word or falling back on its French equivalent. I plunged straight into the collaboration with Dali. It was like a fuse to hidden dynamite. ". . . In *Chien Andalou*, yes, we worked together, we were one. But *L'Age d'Or*, that was my film." He went to the South of France to work with Dali on the script, but after three days Dali, already under the influence of the church,

found collaboration impossible.

We went on to talk about his other films: *Los Olvidados* was a sore point in Mexico. "Many people here did not like it, they say it is bad for Mexico, not the Mexico we want to show the world. Some people even wrote to the papers saying that I should be deported." Now, however, he was a Mexican citizen. It was still very difficult to find producers to make the films he wanted. I asked him about the other films he had made in Mexico—"not interesting, commercial"—and mentioned *Subida al Cielo*. Instantly his eyes flamed, "Yes, it is a nice film. I liked making that . . . very simple, very static . . . nothing happens in it, nothing at all; no progression, but a nice film."

He asked if I had seen any other Mexican films. They were "not interesting . . . slow, heavy, Hollywood—are you going to that dream place?—undramatic". We talked of other directors; of John Huston, whose *Maltese Falcon* and *Treasure of Sierra Madre* he liked; of de Sica: "Yes, I liked *Bicycle Thieves*, but even that, is it not a bit . . . a bit literary as it sees the world?" He had not heard of Max Ophuls. He had just been to see *Limelight* and asked me what I thought of it. I told him how much I disliked it and he agreed. "It is self-pitying, sentimental! That is what I have all my life wanted to attack, to fight, sentimentality, the values of the bourgeois. . . . There is only one man I have ever admired . . . that is Fabre, the man who wrote about ants. You see, I would rather watch a snake than a bourgeois or a Hollywood producer."

We talked of many other things; of Mexico and my reactions to it, of his visits to London, of John Grierson, of his future plans, which include a film in France ("it is easier to make real films there"), of his present chore, and of *Robinson Crusoe*. Again his voice rumbled, his eyes glowed. "That was a film I really wanted to make. You must see that. There's nothing Hollywood about it. I start with Crusoe on the island—no ship or wreck—I have him alone for seven reels, then with Friday for three, and then the pirates just at the end as it is in the book. I just watch Robinson build his house, make pots, grow wheat . . . yes, I made it about his struggle with nature . . . and about solitude . . . and despair."



"*Robinson Crusoe*": ". . . I made it about his struggle with nature, and about solitude . . . and despair."

THREE BRITISH PRODUCTIONS



Above : Richard Wattis, John Mills, Brenda de Banzie and Charles Laughton in a scene from David Lean's *Hobson's Choice*.



Left : Lady Warren (Joan Greenwood) meets Father Brown (Alec Guinness) by the river ; a scene from *Father Brown*, based on the G. K. Chesterton stories and directed by Robert Hamer.



Right : Lord Mountdrago (Orson Welles) and his rival (Alan Badel). This adaptation of Somerset Maugham's story, directed by George More O'Ferrall, makes one of *Three Cases of Murder*.



"Sunnyside": Chaplin "cavorting with woodland nymphs".

CHAPLIN AS DON JUAN

Rene' Micha

Chaplin has played many characters; and he has contemplated playing a good few others—Napoleon, Macbeth, Jesus Christ. And every time he goes back to England they ask him: "What about Hamlet?" It is odd that no one has thought of him as Don Juan—not even on that Moliere-esque occasion when the President of the French Republic received him at the Comedie Francaise. Yet the Don Juan in Chaplin has always been very near the surface: it is perhaps the most persistent characteristic of his work. It is unfortunate that one must expend words—and so many words—in pointing this out; a few images from his films would clinch the argument so much more easily.

There is no need to call Chaplin's private life into evidence, although the innumerable writings of those who have known him, his own admissions, and the succession of law-suits in which he has been involved would all provide persuasive arguments. It is enough, I think, to observe that the life corresponds closely with the work. I would, however, emphasise the tireless interest that Chaplin has always shown in the people—the women, the children, the old men—whom he has encountered in theatres and film studios, in restaurants and trains and in the street, *so long as they are beautiful*. This interest, this reaching out of the spirit, is only equalled by the magnetic attraction which he himself exercises. But before going on to define more closely this aspect of Chaplin's work, it will perhaps be best to examine the tradition in which we are seeking to place him.

The myth of Don Juan has taken many forms, and been accorded many different interpretations. But one theme remains constant: the progress of the hero from one woman to another, which only death can interrupt. Certain elements in the story are not obligatory, but at least two are common to all versions: in every instance the myth entails seduction, and its repetition.

No woman can resist Don Juan. He gains his victories not by the use of love potions or spells, but by the exercise of a complex personality, by physical charm and by an endless capacity for intrigue. Rules of behaviour vary, of course, according to period and the nature of the society concerned; but every age has its shibboleths. The curtain rises as the seducer overcomes resistance by ruse, transgressing some particular law. A man is killed; a sanctuary is violated; a marriage is desecrated. The crime has repercussions: other voices take up the accusation: society ranges itself against the hero. Thus the libertine's career is revealed to us at its least representative moment. We see him throw himself against the obstacle, and destroy himself; we are witnesses of Don Juan's end. His secret is never revealed: what is the source of this energy which can bend the world to its purpose? What is the cause of this weakness which urges its victim on to his destruction? How is the seduction accomplished, and why must it be eternally repeated?

It is remarkable that the poems, plays and operas which have been made on this theme are most generally agreed on the adventures which they do *not* represent—which

are recounted by a valet, complained of by a hard-pressed heroine, boasted by the hero. There are a thousand and one details on which every version is agreed; and in these resides the myth. The variations occur in what is actually shown: here each author puts forward his own conception of the myth, or his personal morality. We are rarely given *Don Juan*, almost always a *Critique of Don Juan*.

The idea of the Seducer has perhaps been best expressed by Mozart; for the musical theatre can encompass, if necessary, an infinity of space and time. "Straight" plays can illuminate parts of a story, but hardly reach beyond those scenes which they put before our eyes. In this connection, the cinema gains enormously from its resemblance to opera. And if one assembles a succession of films (imagines, for instance, Chaplin's work *en masse*), one conjures up a legend that never ends, a hero perpetually reborn.

Chaplin has never played Don Juan as such. None of his films has a plot that is in any way reminiscent of *Burlador* or *Don Giovanni*. But he has frequently conceived characters and situations which have relation to the myth. There is no reason to suppose that he has done this of set purpose, or even that he has been aware of the effect. But the result is significant.

II

A director may play Don Juan as well as an actor. In Chaplin the two roles are inseparable, for, with few exceptions, he has directed all the films in which he has played. In the early days of the cinema it seemed natural that a good actor should himself invent his gags, and should superintend their realisation. In this way Chaplin made many two- and three-reel comedies; from 1918 onwards he progressed to three-reelers, and his comedy, richer and more closely knit into the narrative, called for direction of continuously finer calculation. Nevertheless, the first time he came to direct an entirely serious story, he refrained from appearing in it himself.

The thirty-five films which Chaplin made for Keystone in 1914 have, properly speaking, no plots at all. The actor is given a point of departure, and is then left to work out his comic effects on his own; when these are exhausted, he must simply think of others—not necessarily related to the original situation. It is quite impossible to give synopses of these little films, whose incidents are interchangeable, whose locales are unimportant, and whose characters are all immutably stereotyped. Charlie is perpetually at odds with rivals stronger, richer, more powerful than himself; from these battles, conducted with alternate craft and violence, he emerges by turns victor and vanquished. The prize is almost always a woman.

It would be absurd to dignify these harlequinades with a significance to which they make no pretence; all the same, it is not fortuitous that Charlie should grasp every opportunity of paying court to the heroine, of baffling her suitors, of deceiving her husband. Scenes of seduction are innumerable, relatively lengthy, often irrelevant to the plot. Chaplin does not hesitate to break the rhythm of the narrative for their sake. He shows in them a grace and a truthfulness of feeling all the more unexpected for the clockwork mechanism which otherwise animates these films, one gesture automatically provoking another, blow following from blow, kick answering kick. In this context of traditional slapstick, Charlie sets afoot his lovers' pantomimes, and decks them with never-failing inventiveness. He uses his weakness to touch our pity and then, by a cruel twist, to awaken our laughter.

After a last fling (*His Prehistoric Past*), in which he appeared as the lonely king of a community of Sirens, Chaplin early in 1915 left Keystone for Essanay. In little over a year he directed fourteen films, each scripted in advance. His cameraman on all of them was Rollie Totheroh, who was to be his collaborator for the next twenty-five years; and henceforward Charlie was to have a regular partner, Edna Purviance, who was to fulfil this

"The Fireman": Chaplin
with Edna Purviance.



role until 1923.

The films in this series are far from being uniformly coherent, but at least they are all based on stories, to the thread of which they constantly return. And in them Charlie is composing the character he is to make for ever his own. Already it is possible to recognise his distinctive way of telling a story, the peculiarities of an original personality, and its familiar, stylised appearance. Already he is sketching, though as yet only in outline, the conflict between the individual and society which time will so harshly aggravate. Particularly significant is the way certain scenes come to seem almost obligatory in these stories. The rivalry between two (or more) lovers is no longer one of the elements; more often it provides the entire basis of action. A park or the sea-shore becomes the setting for a burlesque conversation-piece in which the thrusts of Charlie's cane serve for dialogue, with eye-play of outrageous exaggeration, and headlong exits which always turn out to be in the wrong direction. Sometimes the material is more subtle, or at least less commonplace. In *Work*, Charlie trims and polishes his fingernails with a trowel, while chronicling his misfortunes to the heroine—a performance which wins Edna's heart. In *A Night in the Show*, he strikes a match on a dancer's bare foot; and in *The Perfect Lady* he dresses up as a woman to get himself introduced to Edna—with the result that both her father and her suitor start flirting with him.

But it was with *The Tramp* that the familiar character came definitively to life: a character essentially seductive, always winning the heroine's heart, always crushed by the pressure of society—a defeat which affects our attitude not a jot, since we are by now inescapably under the spell of his charm. In *The Tramp*, the daughter of a rich farmer is abducted; Charlie rescues her, is himself beaten up in the process, and nursed back to health. He enters upon the fullness of happiness; even the work on the farm seems to move with a brisker, more lively tempo. Then Edna's fiancé returns. Charlie takes up his bag and goes sadly on his way. Suddenly he gives himself a shake: as the film fades out, we are back with the old image—the jaunty figure of an ever-youthful vagabond.

III

From May 15th to October 23rd, 1917, Chaplin made (for Mutual) twelve films which rank among his best: *The Floorwalker*, *The Fireman*, *The Vagabond*, *One A.M.*, *The Count*, *The Pawnshop*, *Behind the Screen*; *The Rink*, *Easy Street*, *The Cure*, *The Immigrant*, *The Adventurer*. The scenarios of these are so tightly constructed, the texture of the comedy so close, their unity so complete, that the title alone of each is enough to bring the whole film to mind. From the point of view of our thesis, certain of these are of lesser importance: and yet the virtuosity which is Charlie's in all circumstances—whether he is negotiating the ascent of a staircase in a department store, driving a fire engine, chasing a glass round a table, crossing a polished floor with the rhythmic movement of a railway engine on skates—this virtuosity serves consistently as a weapon in the armoury of the professional seducer, justifying in advance the heroine's capitulation. Edna's expression, as she sets eyes on Charlie for the first time in any of his various guises, calls to mind the Don Juan of Kierkegaard: "*To see him is to love him*". The two approaches, that of the lover and that of the clown, are often mingled. If Charlie plays the violin,

Edna, who is doing the washing, cannot resist following the music, and emptying her basin at the moment of crescendo. If Charlie and Edna go skating together, we are soon mesmerised by the devilish technique which carries them round the rink like a humming top, and scatters the other skaters into little heaps on the floor. When Charlie introduces whisky into the Spa-water, the result plays havoc with the patients' equilibrium, but liberates some interesting passions. The whole film goes giddy.

It is worth noting in passing that *The Vagabond* has a happier ending than *The Tramp*: Edna has left Charlie for a romantic painter, but at the last moment she discovers that she still loves the little man. And *Behind the Screen* offers a picturesque variant on the constant theme, in a scene whose implications are comically homosexual—"Goliath" embraces Edna, who is wearing male costume. Charlie surprises them and, himself unaware of Edna's disguise, starts making eyes at Goliath.

Chaplin's contract with First National committed him to make eight films for a fee of one million dollars. These were *A Dog's Life*, *Shoulder Arms*, *Sunnyside*, *A Day's Pleasure*, *The Kid*, *The Idle Class*, *Pay Day* and *The Pilgrim*. The first was made in April, 1918, the last in February, 1923. They were thus longer in the making than their predecessors, for at last Chaplin was working in absolute freedom, in his own studio, and with as much film stock at his disposal as he cared to ask for. With the exception of *A Day's Pleasure* and *The Idle Class* (which has Charlie as a tramp, dreaming of his conquest of a rich, horse-riding widow), they are all masterpieces.

A Dog's Life has a "happy ending". Charlie and Edna, joint owners of a prosperous farm, lean side by side over a cradle (in which a dog lies happily asleep). But this image of contentment becomes tinged with irony when we remember that the new farmer was only the day before tramping the roads; that his wife was a honky-tonk singer; that the dog is a stray, and that all their money is stolen. After the famous title, "Poor France", *Shoulder Arms* shows us Edna sitting among the ruins of her home, while Charlie, in an attempt to convince her that he is an American, knocks his head heavily with a brick—a mime presumably intended to represent the stars of the American national flag. *The Kid* has little in it of Charlie as Don Juan, but a great deal of him as the little man, the wretched victim of society, always ready to hold out a helping hand to anyone worse off than himself. Made at a time when Chaplin was being hounded by divorce proceedings, and under incessant fire from a hostile Press, this film is also, incidentally, a trenchant satire on the American "Mom". *Pay Day* accentuates this inclination towards misogyny—or rather this detestation of a certain kind of woman (prating and ugly: the favourite victim of *Monsieur Verdoux*).

Sunnyside stands apart from the other films in this group: a sort of *opera-bouffe*, its movement is that of music. Charlie at work (he switches from boot-boy to cow-herd, according to the time of day); his affair with the village beauty; the tantrums of his employer; the arrival of a swell from town—these form all the action there is. But interspersed among these incidents (or recitatives) are lyrical arias and duets, balletic figures. Charlie riding bareback on a cow, cavorting with woodland nymphs, out-dandying the Swell, formally wooing the

beautiful heroine. . . . All this is music, vibrantly alive, simple and sophisticated by turns, incessantly creative.

IV

So we come to the final period, and the most extensive—for it began thirty years ago, and has not yet ended. Nor are these divisions (which I have borrowed from Theodore Huff's analysis of Chaplin's career) as arbitrary as might be imagined. For they correspond to varying conditions of work, developing techniques, often to fundamental shifts in approach. Thus a break may definitely be signalled in 1923, when Chaplin joined D. W. Griffith, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks to form United Artists. And it is under this banner that he has made all his films ever since: *A Woman of Paris* (1923), *The Gold Rush* (1925), *The Circus* (1928), *City Lights* (1931), *Modern Times* (1936), *The Great Dictator* (1940), *Monsieur Verdoux* (1947) and *Limelight* (1952).

Up to this time each period of Chaplin's career was distinguished by a unity of what we may call exterior conditions: as a result it is easy to distinguish a film of the Essanay era from (for instance) one of the Mutual comedies. Now, however, it is rather a question of each film creating its own universe, making its own laws. Each coins its characters afresh, with that inventive genius which we associate with such names as Molière or Shakespeare. The style of each is its own, proper discovery.

It is hardly necessary to discuss these films as such. They are all of equal, or almost equal, importance; time has not blurred the memory of them. If our contention is true, that Chaplin has renewed the tradition of Don Juan, they will all bear witness to the fact. Let us then consider a few instances—never forgetting that it is in their essential personality, rather than in twists of plotting and intrigue, that the evidence really lies.

Chaplin has fine eyes, fine hands, a fine voice; but he is small and narrowly built, very far from the popular conception of Don Juan. He lacks the style, the resources, the social standing and the brilliance of the irresistible lover. It is not, therefore, by appearance or address that he makes his conquests.

His weapon, in fact, is spiritual. Chaplin uses the spirit (or, if you prefer it, the soul), as the Don Juan of tradition uses his beauty. He wears it on his sleeve, and by doing so he invariably scores the first hit. But complete victory is not instantaneous: that remains the prerogative of physical beauty. And, anyway, "love at first sight" is itself hyperbole, expressive merely of rapidity in action, success in intrigue beyond the scope of ordinary men—again Kierkegaard's ideal Don Juan, whose simple appearance is enough, the naked force of whose desire secures his instant triumph. Even Don Giovanni cannot claim this sort of success. Mozart's hero does not act precipitately; his legend goes before him; he launches his attack on a prey already fascinated by music, by dance, by the flaunting gorgeousness of his apparel. As for the heroes of literature—far from priding themselves on gaining their ends by a single word, they have continual recourse to disguise, to violence, and to deception—most often with bogus promises of marriage.

Chaplin, likewise, has no ambition to restrict himself

The "Don Juanism of the spirit": Above, Chaplin with Virginia Cherrill, the blind flower-girl, in "City Lights": centre, with Paulette Goddard in "Modern Times": below, with Marilyn Nash in "Monsieur Verdoux".





"Monsieur Verdoux": Chaplin and Martha Raye.

to the single, soul-baring glance. He elaborates it, adapts it to his needs, calls repeatedly on its service through a whole series of manœuvres. Generally he is down on his luck, surrounded by enemies, or disregarded by all; ill-fortune and injustice are his lot; every step forward is a struggle. But he has courage and strength of will; and humour, cunning and an occasional stroke of luck, even if it is only the sort of luck that gets him out of one tight corner to land him immediately in another. Of course undeserved calamity always wins our sympathy; but Charlie could never seduce us so completely if he were not relentlessly a fighter—and continuously a victor. By this he shows himself worthy of our sympathy, and so we freely award it him.

Henri Michaux once invented a story. "Charlie has killed a policeman, and is hungry. He goes through the dead man's pockets, and pulls out his purse. He hurries off to get himself a meal. Meanwhile, the corpse is hurried off too—to the morgue. And the dead man's parents say: 'He's got what he deserved. That's what happens when someone thinks he knows best, and wants to go off and be a policeman instead of working in the fields like everyone else.' And Charlie opens the purse again, takes out a coin and says: 'I think I can afford a cigar'. And so everyone gets what he deserves". That was written by Michaux in 1924; since when Charlie has disposed of a number of other nuisances, including another policeman (in *Monsieur Verdoux*), and has always managed to keep the laughter on his side. In his first films, which he made under the influence of Mack Sennett, he portrayed a character often quite gratuitously malicious: that was the time when he went by the name of Chas. Chaplin. Rectitude and generosity developed; but the malice has never entirely disappeared. There is something of Chas. Chaplin in the millionaire's friend in *City Lights*, who wards the little tramp off from the luxurious limousine; and naturally there is a great deal of him in M. Verdoux. It may not be a malice of which we can always wholly approve, but we are on its side. For us, Charlie has become the ordinary man.

Morally, the picture is far from one of a blameless hero. On the contrary, Charlie is perfectly willing to

admit his weaknesses. The Jewish barber has no hesitation in pocketing the coin he has found in his slice of cake, which singles him out for the fatal mission (*The Great Dictator*). Calvero rescues a young girl from suicide, but is quick enough to gargle when he hears her coughing (*Limelight*). Valery Larbaud's definition of Ulysses (who, as everyone knows, was the model for James Joyce's *Everyman*) is apt for Charlie too: *Homo est*—He is a man—*Misericordia benevolentiaque insignis*—sensitive to the hardships of others, and greatly generous—*humanum fragilitatem non effugit*—not exempt from human weakness—*mortem scilicet reformidat*—assuredly he is afraid of death—*ac diutius in insula Circes moratur*—and too long he lingers on Circe's Isle.

Charlie is us: but us as we are in the theatre. His success is that he represents that creature of divided nature in whom we recognise ourselves, and yet he remains firstly a hero. His particular adventures are lost to view as film after film conjures up, with delicate, inimitable brushstrokes, another, overall design. Arriving late for work, he offers the foreman a wild flower instead of an excuse (*Pay Day*). He is hiding behind a curtain; each time he is uncovered, he imitates a statue (*The Cure*). The horse-shoe which he has slipped into his boxing glove brings him luck: he puts his opponent out for the count (*The Champion*). On the other hand, the rabbit's paw with which he strokes his cheek, sends him off to sleep (*City Lights*). He can touch nothing without a dove starting up in flight, a rabbit bounding off—like the God of Nietzsche's universe, creating a world out of laughter (*The Circus*).

This "Don Juanism" of the spirit, as we may call it, resembles its physical equivalent in that it takes care to preserve an appearance of spontaneity and lack of design, while in fact it conforms to strict rules. These are not always easy to determine, for the hero's approach to his desired end is often by a tortuous route. It is after a long and arduous siege that M. Verdoux at last receives the news that Mme. Grosnay would find his advances not unwelcome. He immediately telephones her, from the flower shop where the message happens to reach him, and launches into an extravagant declaration, in the style which he calculates will be most likely to appeal to his feather-brained prey. Note that, whether as a joke, or simply because it would not occur to him to let slip any opportunity to fascinate, he does all this only a foot or so away from the girl behind the counter—who falls herself a helpless victim in the path of this erotic Juggernaut. So M. Verdoux makes straight for Mme. Grosnay's home, falls upon the maid, then upon a visiting friend, passionately embracing each of them by mistake, before he finally throws himself at the feet of his new victim.

Calvero loves Terry, but he cannot tell her so: he is too old for her, he saved her life. . . . But neither can he endure the thought that she may not love him, or that she should feel herself bound to him out of gratitude or pity. So he sets out to enchant her, with his poetical musings on life, love, etc.—by his clown's antics—and finally by his passionate mime of a lover's declaration. Three times he conjures up his vision of the wonderful twilight in which young Neville will declare his love; the fascination which he exerts over Terry is unmistakable: she has eyes only for Calvero. And all the time one cannot really be sure that he is playing a part. Does even

he realise that he is making love to Terry as he speaks?

The flower girl in *City Lights* is blind. She is touched by Charlie's kindness, but she has no idea of how much he deserves her love, how good he is, and how disinterested. When she sees him for the first time, several seconds pass between the image of the little tramp, which is all she sees at first, and that of a face whose extraordinary beauty quickens the soul. In these seconds, like a drowning woman, she sees her whole life in a new perspective, and learns what we know. This, in fact, is Chaplin's favourite method of seduction. For it is really us whom he is out to seduce.

For in the theatre it is not enough for Don Juan to carry off the heroine, to make his thousand and one conquests; above all, he must seduce his audience. Chaplin's films apply themselves indefatigably to that end. They transform their weak, defenceless hero into a David; Chaplin's "humble heart" into a dazzling spirit which directly communicates with ours. In the end, it is always Chaplin who really wins. He survives his rivals, his betters, his executioners. If he falls, it is with the honours of war: he chooses defeat (as in *Monsieur Verdoux*) because it is the sign of truth. Often the end is not a real end; we guess that things will not stop there, that the little fellow will continue on his way. And in their turn the amorous setbacks are unimportant; they happen in a type of story where anything is possible at any moment; they do not affect the myth, and they scarcely concern us, for we have been won over completely.

For—and this is perhaps the most original feature of his "Don Juanism"—Chaplin never ceases to be a clown. He shaves a customer in time to one of Brahms' Hungarian Dances (*The Great Dictator*), counts his money with flying fingers like a cashier (*Monsieur Verdoux*), tightens all the nuts within reach, and includes the fire-cocks and coat buttons (*Modern Times*). These things together make up a single character; the sad face pressed against the window of the saloon and the bootlaces sucked like macaroni (*The Gold Rush*) unite to seduce us. Chaplin is not, in fact, a comic Don Juan. He is successively Don Juan and Leporello, and gets his prin-

cipal effects from this incessant coming and going. Taken by surprise while attempting his conquest of Mme. Grosnay, M. Verdoux improvises a dance, on the theme of chasing a moth, which despatches him through the window. So, in the tempo which is his own, Chaplin acts out amorous gibberish—the unexpected return of the husband, the aside, the explanation which does not dispel jealousy, and the *buffo* pirouette which, for the moment, ends the story. Sentiment is never carried through to the end. He breaks the expression of it with a word or a sign as effective as the referee's "Break" to a pair of boxers. Calvero interrupts his speech by waving a kipper under Terry's nose. . . . "A nice kipper". In *City Lights*, Charlie follows every movement of the blind girl with the utmost tenderness: a jar of dirty water checks his dream.

A taste for seduction carries with it, it may seem, the need for self-questioning. After *Don Juan*, Lenau wrote *Faust*. Grabbe put the two together in a play. There comes a moment (sometimes when he is growing old) at which the seducer changes into Faust. This is, perhaps, what has happened in *Limelight*.

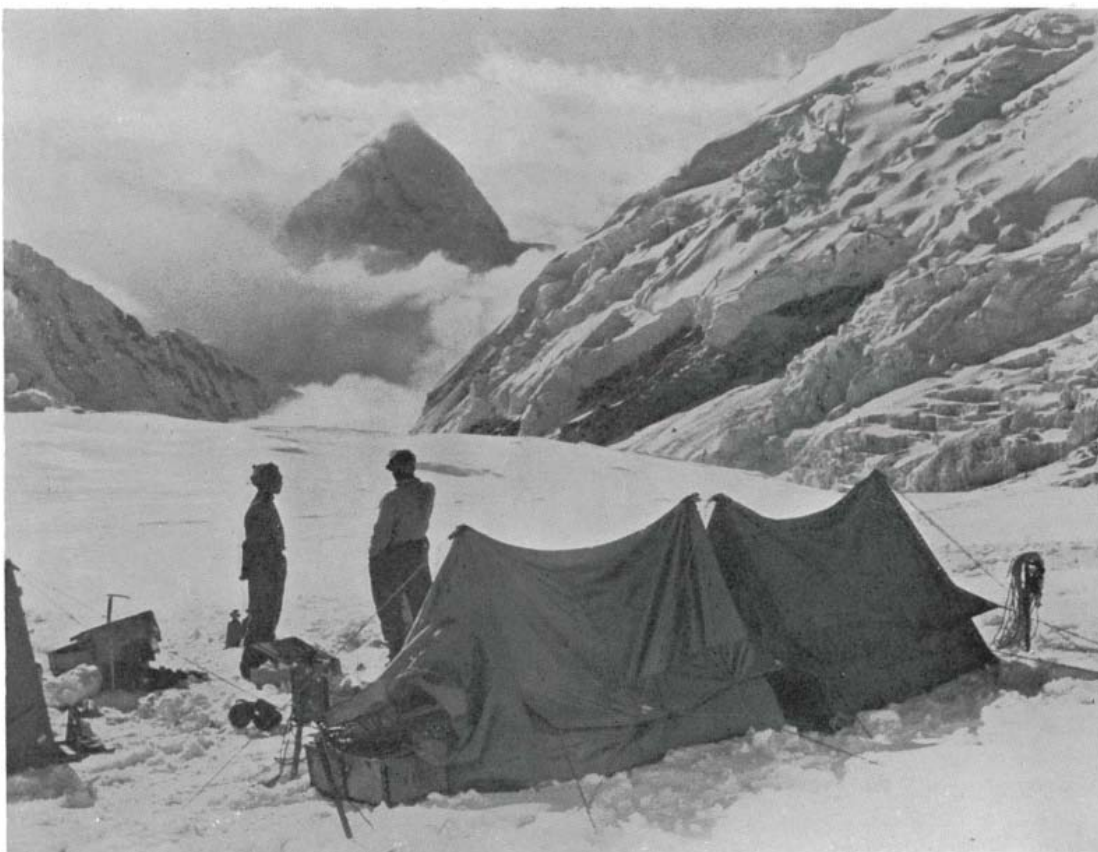
V

I would like to finish with one incident from Chaplin's life. It happened in London in 1921, during a big party given in his honour. There was a terrific storm, but Edward Knoblock's guests were engaged in a heated discussion and took no notice of it. Suddenly Chaplin went over to the window, threw open the curtains and, in a loud voice, challenged God. At that moment, the lightning flashed, the company was overwhelmed by the noise of thunder, and Chaplin fell as if struck. They carried him into the next room. Frightened, stupefied, they sent for a doctor. The door re-opened, and in bounded the infidel, a joyous angel, two pillows pinned to his back in the shape of wings.

This article, which has been translated from the French and slightly abridged, first appeared in the May-June, 1953, issue of *Le Disque Vert*. We are grateful to the editors of the magazine for permission to reprint M. Micha's article here.



Chaplin and Claire Bloom in "Limelight": "... the seducer changes into Faust".



"The Conquest of Everest": The camp at the Western Cwm, at a height of 22,000 feet.

FILMING EVEREST

Since 1922, when Captain J. B. Noel pitched his developing tent on the Rongbuk Glacier, a number of films have recorded the doings of Himalayan expeditions—on Kanchenjunga, Kamet and Annapurna as well as on Everest. The cameraman's immediate preoccupation, one supposes, was to record as much as possible of the action; the task of the editor at home (often the same individual) was to build up a continuous picture that would convey the character and significance of the whole exploit, and bring out the latent drama. He would have two aims in view: to produce a record which the climbers would accept, and to enlist the sympathetic interest of the non-climbing public who would see the film in the cinemas. Film rights and royalties have been important sources of revenue to Himalayan ventures.

Captain Noel, who filmed the 1922 and 1924 attempts on Everest, struck the climbers as "*indefatigable in his efforts to record every phase of the daily life and of the achievements of the expedition*"—in 1922, indeed, he spent four days at the North Col (23,000 feet). These two films—*The Climbing of Mt. Everest** and *Epic of Everest**—are considerably more successful as record of fact than as stimulus to the imagination. There are admirable shots of the terrain—the pinnacled Rongbuk Glacier, the treacherous crevassed slopes up to the North Col—and some strikingly beautiful ones of clouds streaming over a high snow ridge. But the spectator is never drawn into the picture, never invited to share in imagination the feelings or efforts of the climbers. The main reason for this failure is probably the distance at which most of the

shots had to be taken—the climbers on the upper part of the mountain were caught, through telephoto lens, by a camera two miles away and 4,000 feet below. All we can see of them in action are jerky little manikins whom we can't distinguish one from another, for there have been no (or at least not enough) close shots earlier on to build up the personality of each man and to make us feel that we really know the party. Nor does the commentary, intense and naïve by turns, do much to bridge the gap between the climber on the mountain and the spectator in the cinema.

Something of the same criticism could be made of the other early Himalayan films. This is emphatically not a criticism of their makers' enterprise and achievement in difficult conditions; but of the total effect made by these films, some of which I have recently seen, compared with that of later Himalayan films, fruits of the French expedition to Annapurna in 1950, the Swiss expedition to Everest in 1952 and finally the British last year.

Between Captain Noel's films and *Annapurna* lies a quarter of a century's technical advance. The commentary you read has given way to the commentary you hear; the grand but gloomy monochrome mountains have burst into dazzling blue, silver and green; the climbers move in a world of terrible beauty. But the difference is more than one of sound and colour. As a record, *Annapurna* is not impeccable. The first fascinating stage of the expedition, the actual finding of the mountain in unmapped country, is barely touched on; and though no one can complain because the top section of the climb is unphotographed (the cine-camera was lost in the crevasse where the returning climbers were all but buried by an avalanche), the reconstruction of the summit need hardly

* These films were made available to Miss Adam Smith through the National Film Library.

have been so weak, in colours cruder than those of the scenes shot on the spot. It is in drawing in the spectator that *Annapurna* so magnificently succeeds. Close-ups on the approach march and at the Base Camp—Terry jolly-ing up the porters, Schatz undergoing an oxygen test, Cudot, the doctor, anxiously watching while a porter carries a box of medical supplies over a mountain torrent—give individuality to the little figures of later scenes, strung out across a snow-slope. The drama of Herzog's and Lachenal's descent from the summit in a blizzard is seen through the eyes of those who are watching and waiting below. We are with them in the yellow tent with the packing-case table, as they turn on the portable radio for the weather report, as they open the flies of the tent, peer out, see nothing, and shuddering with cold draw back into shelter; we are compelled to share their fears and their hopes. At the end, we have not only feasted our eyes on what is rich and strange and wild—rhododendrons high as houses, Tibetan dancers, ice-cascades; we have lived through an experience.

Annapurna set a very high standard. The film of last year's Swiss expedition, which had its première in Geneva last August, was the first to show Everest in colour. It impressively brings home the nature of the struggle: the patient exploration through the labyrinth of the ice-fall, the gymnastics necessary to cross the crevasse at the entrance to the Western Cwm, the terrible grind to the South Col, the desolation of that windswept plateau. But I found it difficult to feel involved—partly because of a commentary too dry and impersonal, partly because we were not given the chance to know the members of the party before we saw them in action. I found the film beautiful and striking but (though I feel churlish in saying so) unmoving.

There seemed to be one major problem facing the makers of our own *The Conquest of Everest* (filmed by Tom Stobart and, at the higher altitudes, George Lowe, edited by Adrian de Potier and produced by Countryman Films). How could the drama of the victory be put across when the very success and smoothness of the expedition had deprived it of the obviously dramatic moments that the situation might be expected to produce? There had been no avalanches engulfing the party, no snow-bridges breaking under laden men, no human suffering such as we saw in the frostbitten heroes of *Annapurna*. So, when I saw the film, I was surprised, impressed and moved to find how much drama and tension it held, but of an entirely different kind.

It was the drama of effort—from the compression chamber at Farnborough, where the men were put through high altitude tests, to the South Col, and the first assault party dragging themselves painfully back from the South Summit, ten yards at a time, and then flopping in the snow. The nature of the problem was unforgettably stated in one shot of Everest from the Western Cwm. The camera began at eye level; then it went up, and up and up the face of rock and snow, and at last, when we seemed to be putting our necks back to the furthest stretch, came the sky. Surely no one could climb so high! That was the opponent—the challengers, these little figures doggedly hacking their way up the ice-fall, plodding slowly across the Lhotse face, slumping painfully into a tent on the South Col. But they were figures to whom, after the approach march, the scenes at camp-site and bathing-pool, we could give names and personalities.

Bound up with all this effort, and conveyed with complete simplicity and force, was another theme: the goodness of the men to each other. Evans comes down from the South Summit, at the limit of exhaustion; Tensing tenderly wipes the frost particles from his cheeks and

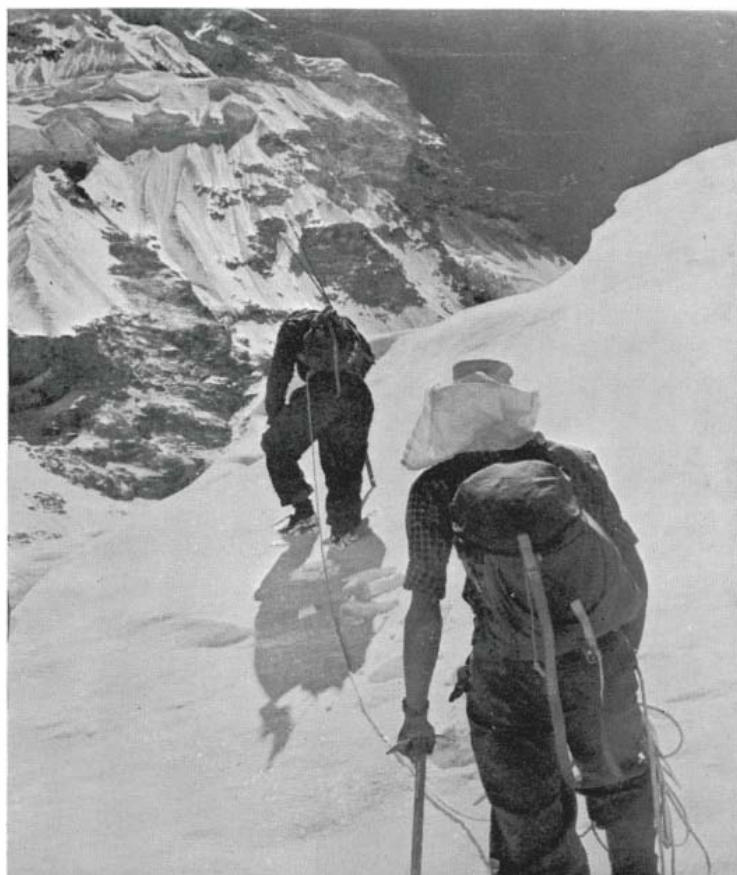
"*The Conquest of Everest*": Hillary and Band climbing the ice-fall.

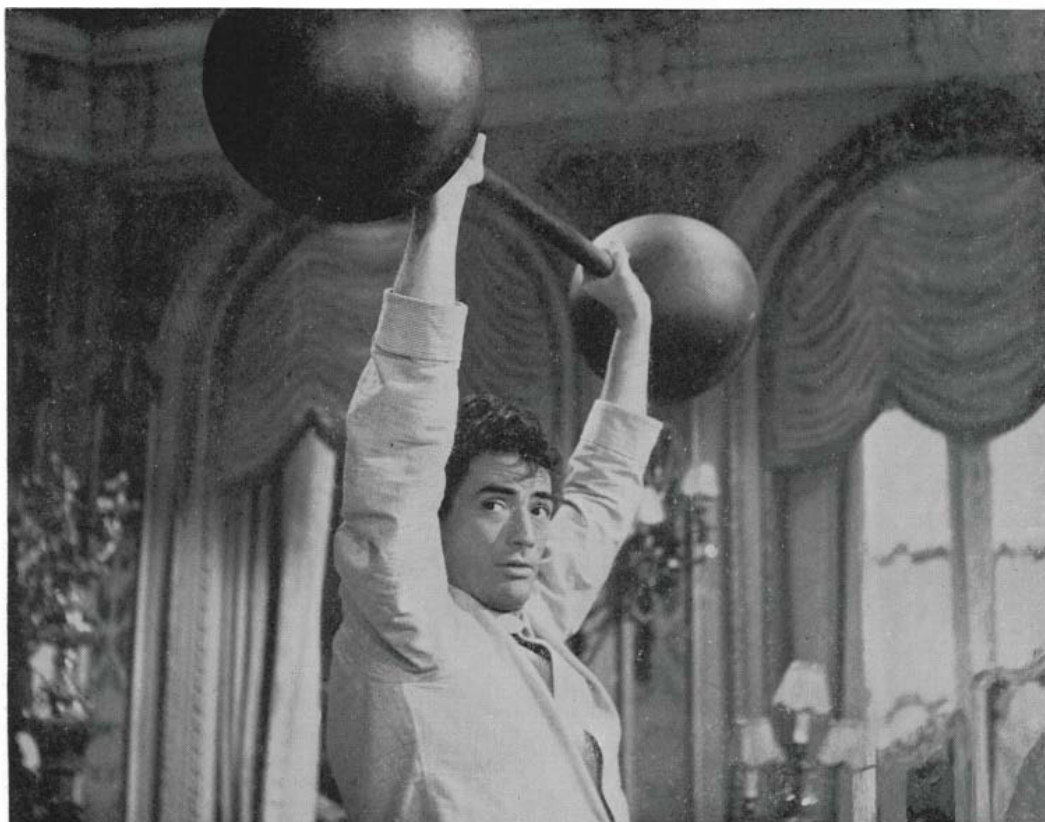
eyes. Climbers who have been sitting out gales in tiny tents set to and brew hot drinks for those in worse plight than themselves. In such gestures all the old, worn phrases about co-operation and team-work take on a new and touching life.

The real climax of the picture is not when the summit has been reached. The final climb had to be invisible, as the cine-camera could not be taken above the South Col, and the producers would not use here some of the splendid still photographs of the final ridge. I regret this decision, because these pictures make clear the nature of that particular, supreme effort; though Hillary's commentary on the sound-track, while the camera (from an Indian Air Force aeroplane) circles the summit for a god's eye view, is impressive enough.

The big moment comes after the camera has switched us back to the Advance Base in the Western Cwm, and we are plunged into uncertainty. What about those signals they were to make with sleeping-bags from the Col, announcing failure or success? What is the chap with the glasses seeing? How many figures are coming down the Lhotse face—one, two, three, five? Then—not a particularly clear shot, but to me the most moving moment of the whole film—a solitary figure runs up across the snow, across the line of the camera, to meet the descending climbers: Hunt. We know the news: he doesn't, yet. Then the climax; Lowe's wave of his ice-axe towards the summit, the mad rush up the slope from the camp towards Hillary and Tensing, the grinning Sherpa faces, the wild hugging and thumping and overflowing happiness.

Louis MacNeice's commentary was here and there inappropriately lush, Arthur Benjamin's music sometimes distracting—we could be trusted to recognise the summit without that banshee crescendo every time. But these are small matters to set against the cumulative effect of the whole; against its unequalled record of unearthly beauty, of unbelievable effort, of man's humanity to man.



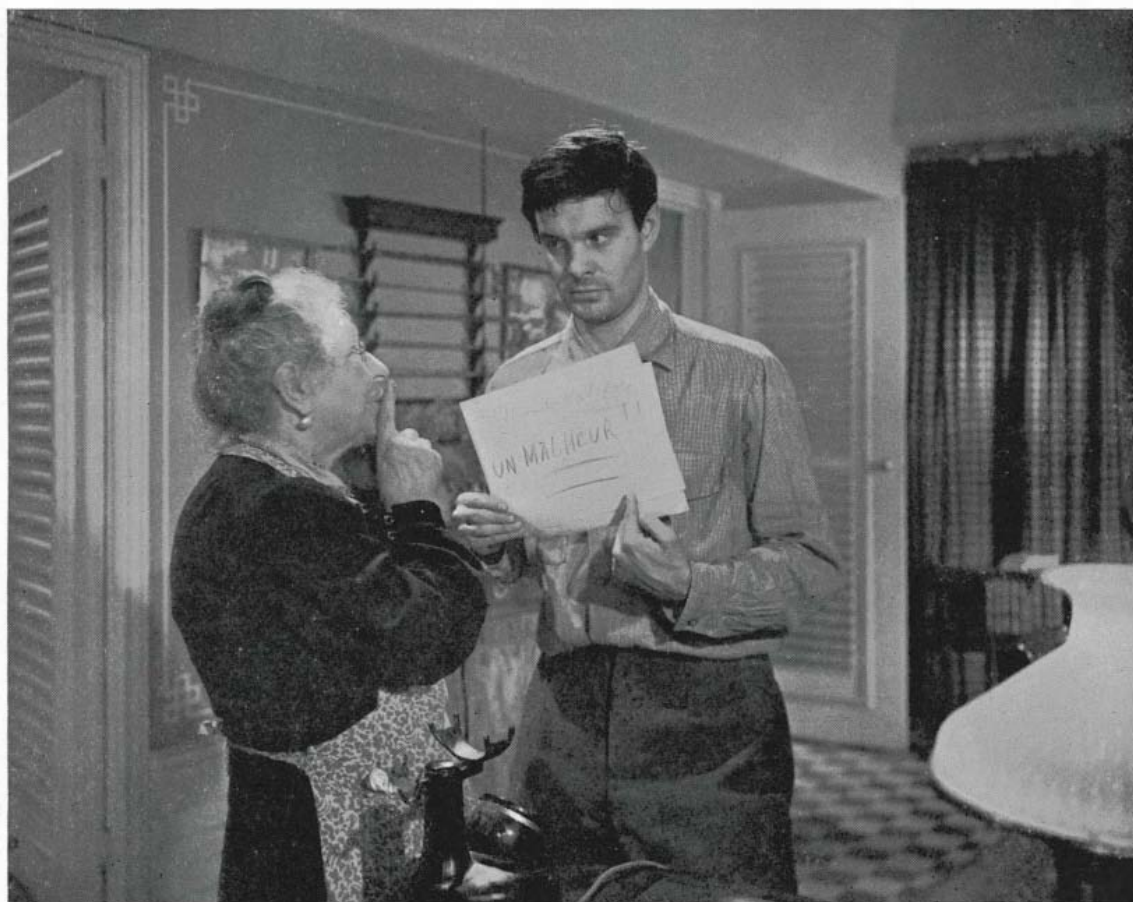


Recent

The Million Pound Note

Gregory Peck stars in *The Million Pound Note*, adapted from Mark Twain's story by Jill Craigie and directed by Ronald Neame.

Below : Louis Jourdan in a scene from Jacques Becker's comedy, *Rue de l'Estrapade*. Following in the style of *Edouard et Caroline*, the film re-unites its director, its script-writer (Annette Wademant) and its leading players (Daniel Gélin and Anne Vernon).



Rue de l'Estrapade

Comedies

Kiss Me, Kate



Ann Miller in a scene from *Kiss Me, Kate* (directed by George Sidney), M.G.M.'s three-dimensional version of Cole Porter's Broadway "Taming of the Shrew".

Below : Lucille Ball and her husband, Desi Arnaz, appear in Vincente Minnelli's *The Long, Long Trailer*, a comedy concerned with the problems of house-keeping in an outsize caravan.



The Long, Long Trailer



Film Reviews

Cyd Charisse and Fred Astaire in the ballet "Girl Hunt" from "The Bandwagon".

THE BAND WAGON

Reviewed by Gavin Lambert

It is not altogether surprising that every American musical since *On the Town* has proved something of a disappointment; the musical film, with its unavoidable diversity of elements and separate talents to be combined, is a difficult genre in which to create and sustain a unity. Ideally, as in *On the Town*, one would like the functions of director, choreographer and leading dancer to be joined in one person, otherwise a disparity of styles (Mamoulian and Charles Walters in *Summer Holiday*, Minnelli and Kelly in *An American in Paris*) can become sharply apparent. In *An American in Paris*, weaknesses of script apart, Minnelli's elegant sophistication seemed to cause Gene Kelly as choreographer to attempt "balletic" effects for which his own invention was not sufficiently developed; and a kind of hangover of the same style remained in Kelly's own *Singin' in the Rain*, which had brilliant passages but also a little too much "art", giving the film a more pretentious framework than it could bear.

That *The Band Wagon* (M.G.M., of course) resolves the series of disappointments and provides the gayest musical entertainment since we were swept from the credit titles into "New York, New York, it's a wonderful town!", is due to a number of attractive talents who seem to have agreed on their level and enjoyed keeping to it. The result hasn't the "daring" impact of *On the Town*, but it contains these not inconsiderable advantages: a script by Betty Comden and Adolph Green which invests a backstage story with a generous amount of New York wit and smartness and a minimum of false sentiment; a director, Vincente Minnelli, who has developed finely as a craftsman and has an acknowledged flair for giving dance numbers fluidity and exciting rhythm; musical numbers designed by Oliver Smith, the scenic artist and co-director of the American National Ballet Theatre, and choreographed by Michael Kidd; some apt and *chic* settings by Preston Ames and Cedric Gibbons, and agreeably toned Technicolor photography by Harry Jackson; and, the incomparable Fred Astaire.

Astaire, in fact, whose talent as a dancer has tended to obscure his great skill as an actor, is given one of his best parts as Tony Hunter, a musical star beginning to slip in Hollywood who decides to return to Broadway. A couple

of friends (Nanette Fabray and Oscar Levant) have written a vehicle for him, but it falls into the hands of the redoubtable Jeffrey Cordova—"he *is* the theatre"—at that moment directing and starring in his own "adaptation" of *Oedipus Rex* and directing two other Broadway shows. In no time he is turning the script into "a modern *Faust*," believing he can combine a successful musical with a "message." ("I always say there's no difference between the rhythm of Bill Shakespeare's verse and the rhythm of Bill Robinson's feet—they're both *entertainment*.") After a disastrous try-out in New Haven, from which the backers stagger out *en cortège*, the show has to be reshaped into a success by Hunter. This allows for a good deal of bright incidental theatre satire, most notably in the character of Cordova (played with glorious relish by Jack Buchanan), a memorable absurdity who takes off a pair of false bleeding eyes for his *Oedipus* curtain call, passionately declaims a new script to backers with an exhibitionism that must surpass Irving's in *The Bells*, makes a spine-chillingly complacent first night speech to a depressed cast, and whose general display of vanity, cunning, affection and temperament is deliciously funny. There are also some other acidly staged scenes, notably the disastrous dress-rehearsal during which a revolving stage loaded with artistic decors and chorines goes out of control, and the first-night flop, ingeniously conveyed simply by the camera picking out a few apt details of "symbolic" scenery.

As for the numbers (songs by Howard Dietz and Arthur Schwartz), Astaire dances in a gaudy 42nd Street amusement arcade, in which slot machines and their addicts are picturesquely incorporated; he does a charming romantic dance with his leading lady (Cyd Charisse) in Central Park at night; and the *pièce de résistance*, a ballet based on the literature of Raymond Chandler and Mickey Spillane, in which Astaire dances a private eye involved with raffish thugs and crooks, a slinky nightclub brunette and a double-crossing blonde (both danced by Cyd Charisse), and commentates the action in a brilliant pastiche of Spillane prose, is certainly one of the best numbers in any musical. Astaire's finesse and delicacy are at their height; and Minnelli, one feels, is the perfect director for him to work with. Some of the other numbers are old favourites well revived: *Triplets* (Nanette Fabray, Astaire, Buchanan) and *Louisiana Hayride* (Nanette Fabray).

Apart from an incautious three or four minutes intended to establish Miss Charisse as a "classical" ballet dancer before she is signed for the musical, and her brief but still

tenuous romantic episodes with Astaire (during which one reminds oneself what a good dancer she can be), *The Band Wagon* never falters; and these flaws, in any case, are minor ones. The film remains a smooth, smart, inventive and altogether invigorating entertainment of the kind that has been less frequent lately, and it offers some of the best work that Astaire and Minnelli have ever done.

THE ROBE

Reviewed by Basil Wright

As a film on a religious subject, Henry Koster's *The Robe* has rather fewer lapses of taste than most of its predecessors. If the actual speaking of Christ's cry from the Cross is a major error, it is not multiplied. In general, the subject is treated with reasonable reverence and is a deal better than *Quo Vadis*, which was a perfect illustration of Aristotle's remark about the ludicrous being merely a sub-division of the ugly. *The Robe* is unlikely to do any harm; indeed, errors and all, its vivid, almost raw depiction of the Crucifixion may, in a way, do some good to those unthinking churchgoers who tend unconsciously to regard that episode as a sad but innocuous puppetry.

The cast includes a dissolute Roman aristocrat (Richard Burton), who is in charge of the execution party; his Greek slave (Victor Mature) who becomes one of the earliest converts; Caligula (Jay Robinson) who is ever so wicked and yet kind of upset inside; a girl called Diana who has absolutely nothing to do, and is played to perfection by Jean Simmons; and a number of others, including Ernest Thesiger (as Tiberius) with a fantastically permed wig but a presence which commands most of the inept dialogue he is given to speak. The plot concerns the effect of Christ's robe on the young Roman after he has won it by casting lots. Conversion follows, and the inevitable march to martyrdom to the tune of a celestial and highly stereophonic choir, courtesy of Alfred Newman. The colour is extremely variable. Many of the Palestinian sequences have real quality, in browns and greys and dark reds; but those dealing with Rome and Capri are incredibly *kitsch*. The art director apparently preferred Tadema to Leighton.

That would be all one had to say were it not for CinemaScope, of which system of photography and projection *The Robe* is the first full-length example.

Its disadvantages are obvious. The screen is enormously wide, but lacks height to a degree which makes nonsense of all ideas of pictorial composition other than the frieze, which, after all, occupies only a limited, if honourable, position in the history of the visual arts. Now the frieze needs a context; the Elgin marbles would look better were they restored to their proper position, as any visitor to the Parthenon may note. CinemaScope, a slightly curved frieze, has no context; the eyes are required to take in width but to ignore height; that is, width is exaggerated to a degree in which height

becomes a necessity of which we are deprived.

But—and I venture to suggest, foolhardily no doubt, that it is a biggish but—the factor of movement must be taken into account. In static works, we are used, in general, to the rectangle-nearly-a-square, and so far the cinema has kept to this. The old-time Magnascope, incidentally, enlarged the image enormously, but kept to the same proportions. Nevertheless Gance reached out towards the conception of the triptych—a conception still not without validity for further experiment; and in general it is not necessary for the film to be confined to the spatial conventions of painting. It is movement within the frame which makes the difference. Frame, do we say? That in itself is a static, painterly conception, and in a sense CinemaScope cracks the frame at its outer edges. You have to look at it differently, and when it is successful the difference is that of motion. In *The Robe*, certain scenes are successful because the motion is fitted to the area involved. This happens, roughly speaking, in two ways. The first is when the entire slit of the screen is filled with action, as in the staggering night shot, with a tracking camera, of four white horses galloping towards you. The second is when a complex series of actions balance within the long and narrow area before you. There is only one sequence in this film which sustains this complexity of action—the Crucifixion. Here can be seen in embryo all the possibilities of the system. The levels of perception involved are (a) the extreme long shots of Calvary and of the City of Jerusalem; (b) the watchers and the gambling soldiers; and (c) those on the three crosses. The interesting thing about this sequence is that the close-ups of the Greek slave watching Jesus are not off-balance as are most of the other close-ups in the film. The vast acres of space to the side of Victor Mature's contorted face are somehow filled (not visibly, but in context) by the wider images which precede and follow. The wide, low screen here works, and it works partly by editing and partly by an extraordinary piece of camera movement—a vertical crane-shot from ground level to behind the shoulders of the Man on the cross. There is a hint here—much more so than in the obvious scenes of pageantry, chase or combat—of real possibilities in this new and as yet recalcitrant aspect of the film medium.

On a certain pre-determined scale, therefore, Professor Chrétien has invented a system which can enlarge the aesthetic possibilities of cinema. But this enlargement of the possibilities must also involve self-restraint on the part of the film-maker. Only certain sequences need this elongated screen. For others—intimate two-shots, close-ups, details—surely a simple masking device could be evolved, just as in the old days of the Magnascope (I remember *Chang and Hell's Angels*) the screen only swelled to engulf you for the moments of vast action and complex movement—an elephant stampede or a pattern of aerial dog-fights. And what technical impossibilities prevent the development of Gance's triptych, or even, for the time being, a mere diptych? Presumably the anamorphic lens does not preclude the idea of a split-screen.

The CinemaScope image. Marcellus (Richard Burton) and Diana (Jean Simmons) defy Caligula in a scene from "The Robe."





"From Here to Eternity": Montgomery Clift.

The Robe, of course, is only the forerunner, the *Jazz Singer*, of its epoch. It may be the answer to the immediate problems of the cinema industry or it may be quite otherwise. But to lovers of the film medium the CinemaScope principle—whose greatest gift may be its enormous emphasis on *flatness*—is something which may give them, through the first film director of genius who uses it, something of the quality sought hitherto by the Griffiths, the Stroheims, and the Eisensteins. But let us also leave room for the other artists who, like Vigo, are content, and rightly content, with a tiny screen, and images of great import seen as in a glass darkly.

THE MAN BETWEEN

Reviewed by Penelope Houston

The Man Between is not a film that can be considered in isolation; it harks back so deliberately in title, in subject, in structure and in tone to *The Third Man* that the critic cannot but take the earlier work as a starting point, make the comparisons that the picture seems to be challenging. *The Third Man* was itself one of those films which attain a significance out of all proportion to their probable intentions. Its picture of the tense, uneasy frontier between East and West reflected—or was felt to reflect, which amounts to much the same thing—a place and an attitude; its jangling, restless tune on the zither attacked the nerves; and in *Harry Lime* it created a character who could be, and was, accepted as a popular symbol. The film acquired, in fact, a certain place in contemporary legend.

In *The Man Between*, the decaying baroque of Vienna is replaced by the grimmer, more melancholy streets of Berlin; *Harry Lime*, the criminal without a conscience, by Ivo Kern, a racketeer whose impulses towards honesty are made all the more apparent by the cynical bravado with which he conceals them; and the outsider, the stranger whose arrival precipitates a crisis, has become a young, inexperienced and vulnerable English girl on a holiday visit to her brother. The similarities are marked; the sense of remoteness and unreality as the newcomer tries to assess a strange, alarming environment; the careful preparation for the first entry of Ivo Kern (the hat and coat seen on the bar, the boy on the bicycle circling around in the street), matching that prolonged build-up to the appearance of *Harry Lime*; the brilliant final shot, with the man lying dead in the road, the police dog standing over his body and the frontier barrier coming down, ending the film on the same uneasy note, as of an episode arbitrarily closed.

That the film should appear merely an indistinct carbon copy of a distinguished original is primarily the fault of the script. *Harry Kurnitz*, a writer responsible for *Melba* and

previously for such works as *One Touch of Venus* and *Pretty Baby*, has constructed a story which, stripped of its elaborations, comes down to a very simple and very familiar situation. The inexperienced girl (Claire Bloom) is attracted by the mystery man (James Mason); his associates kidnap her into the Eastern Sector and he agrees, for his own reasons, to help her escape; love, the racketeer's discovery of a conscience and his sacrifice of his own life to save hers become at this point not so much predictable as obligatory. For all his competence, James Mason cannot make Ivo Kern an authentic character. The writing is superficial, the man's disillusionment too glibly expressed, the transition from tough opportunism to heroism too flatly assumed. And the relationship with the girl, the situation at the centre of the film, unhappily suffers from Claire Bloom's most disappointing performance. Her playing appears mannered to the point of self-consciousness, and she gives an impression of remaining, as it were, outside the action.

To camouflage, perhaps, the weakness of the script, Carol Reed has erected an elaborate scaffolding of detail. He has not chosen to investigate the moral and political implications of the story—these never emerge from the background—but to develop the narrative through tricks, reiterated plot twists, the rapid moving of events from one war-ravaged Berlin location to another. The opening, with the arrival of the English girl, the appearance of the boy on the bicycle, the extraordinary behaviour of the German sister-in-law (stylishly played by Hildegard Neff), the mysterious happenings at the nightclub, the visitor at midnight, cleverly establishes a sense of strain and urgency. But all the director's practised ingenuity fails to sustain the tension. An incident such as the kidnapping, with the snow-covered car crawling down the street, its windscreen wipers keeping up an ominous thudding, is most effectively staged. Only a determination to find exotic locations, though, seems to explain the scene at the skating rink, in which Ivo and his confederate discuss their plans at the tops of their voices over a distance of several yards.

One is left with a display of considerable technical proficiency, most notably in the handling of the first and final scenes, and with Reed's accustomed acuteness in observation and in the direction of players, such as the West German agent (very well played by Ernst Schroeder) or his Eastern counterpart, Halendar (Aribert Waescher), a large, bulky man, at once comic and incongruously alarming. But the skill and technical finesse seem misplaced; the story collapses under them.

The Man Between has, however, its place in Carol Reed's career as yet another study of the outcast, the man cut off from society, the man by temperament and in fact on the run. Ivo Kern, who wins sympathy less by repenting of his record than by accepting it, comes somewhere between *Harry Lime* and the victim-hero of *Odd Man Out*. One might have expected Reed to enlarge on his situation, to make of the relationship with the devoted small boy something more than a plot "gimmick"; but the character remains shadowy and undeveloped.

The Man Between cannot but prove a disappointment, since even at its best it merely echoes a better film. Sir Carol Reed is perhaps the only British director to have achieved, since the war, an international reputation equal to that of the leading Hollywood film-makers. In this case, though, he seems to have reached that danger point in an artist's career at which he begins to repeat his effects, to cover, more superficially, the same ground. The maker of an immensely successful picture may well find difficulty in escaping from it, in resisting the temptation, or pressure, to try it again. One cannot but feel, though, that Sir Carol has worked this vein to its limit; that the British film industry should provide something more profitable and more stimulating for its leading craftsman.

NOUS SOMMES TOUS DES ASSASSINS

Reviewed by David Fisher

Social propaganda is a curious hybrid; at its best, a mixture of journalism and prophecy (of the Jeremiah type); at its worst, sentimental and flatulent. Nevertheless, whatever its quality, the intention of the propagandist never varies; that is to effect a change upon the face of society, to transform, to modify. That an age such as ours, with its highly developed

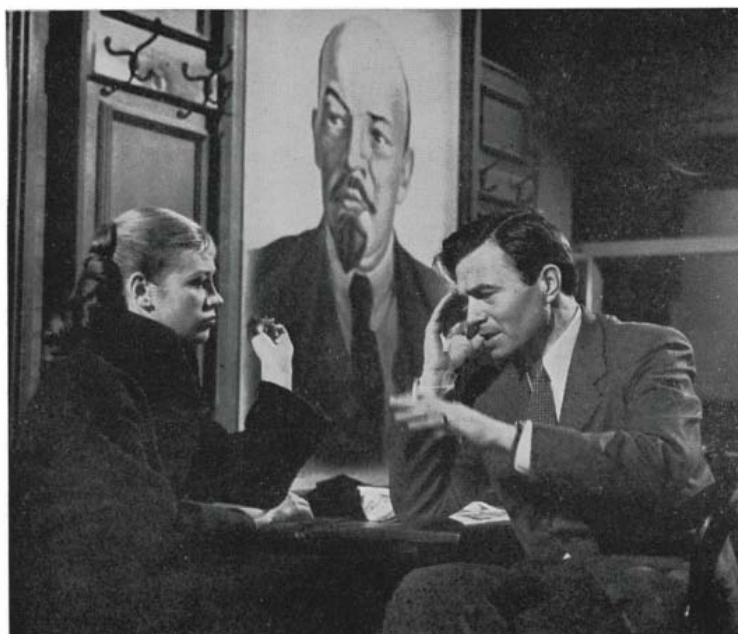
social conscience, should have produced little but documents, exposés and White Papers is understandable. We are fair, we are just, and we are, therefore, incompetent social propagandists. As the title of his film reveals, André Cayatte is not fair. And for that reason I personally welcome him as a new and interesting personality in the cinema.

This is his second film on a subject of this kind (I have not seen its predecessor, *Justice est Faite*, a comment on trial by jury). It is a noble failure. Noble because M. Cayatte avoids the sentimental and the slick, but a failure none the less, because he does not sustain the prophetic note; the prophet tends all too often to be ousted by the preacher. This failure is, as I have suggested, one of equilibrium only—to be explained not in terms of lack of conviction but of lack of craft. For propaganda, whether social, political or religious, has become one form of expression in which sincerity counts for little: style—or perhaps, more exactly, technique—is ultimately more important than content; it is not so much what is said as the way in which it is said that convinces (as witness the general reaction to election broadcasts). The reason, of course, is that—thanks to modern journalism—the subject matter of the propagandist has become contemporary and familiar: an issue uppermost in the minds of his audience. In the case of M. Cayatte's film, the issue is capital punishment.

But contemporaneity is not, of itself, sufficient to make a work of art—not even when fused with passion and indignation. It is only when allied to irony that passion and indignation become *sæva indignatio*; only then does the propagandist become an artist.

The shadow of Swift has been evoked deliberately, for it illustrates M. Cayatte's unique strength as a creative personality—his sense of irony. At his best this lends his work a hard, gritty carapace which catches and reflects a brilliant light upon every detail of his subject. Even from the first sequence of this film, is it not obvious that here is a new and profound sense of irony at work?—that desolate city landscape which looks like a deserted battlefield or a chunk of the moon; on the sound-track, a monotonous tinny drumming as the German drummers practise—the sound calling to mind all the ritual of an execution. And later the irony becomes grimly humorous in the sequence in which Le Guen, suffering from an internal hæmorrhage, is—with much pomp and circumstance—rushed to hospital to be patched up, so that the Law can kill him at its leisure. The same sort of irony illuminates the predicament of Le Guen's young brother, Michel, when he is handed a chopper by his farmer-employer and told to kill the ducks—to kill the birds in a manner similar to that in which his brother will be killed. There is irony, too, in the study of the two prison chaplains: the one tough, acquiescent, silencing his Christianity in the need to bring succour to the condemned; the other, his Christianity prompting him to deny the Law which demands the taking of life, yet, because of his creed and his sensitivity, unable to fulfil his duties. It is significant, however, that as soon as M. Cayatte allows the edge of his irony to soften, as soon as he begins to preach about the need for better housing, psychiatrists for all, etc., the film descends almost to banality. This may suggest that only by exploiting his sense of irony will Cayatte develop as an artist.

Nous sommes tous des Assassins is unique among recent films of its genre; as different from, for instance, the glib and sentimental *Knock On Any Door* as granite from fudge. Only that flawed, near-great film *Los Olvidados* provides a just and revealing comparison. Fundamentally the difference between the two films is æsthetic: a difference of stance. For Cayatte, though in every sense of the word *engagé*, remains outside the material; Bunuel does not; he works like a maggot from within. In *Los Olvidados* Jaibo and his gang are studied with the care of a surgeon examining a wound; their disaster is revealed as a moral disaster. However clinically, however pitilessly, Bunuel may study their predicament, he is passionately concerned with them as human beings, not as ideas. Cayatte, on the other hand, preaching in terms of humanity and mankind, gives the impression of wanting to fight an abstraction with an abstraction, to make war upon injustice with the tooth-pick of generalisation. Uninterested in character, except in a purely general sense, he transforms his film into a QED, a demonstration of a point of view geometrically expressed in terms of five residents of a death cell.



"The Man Between": Hildegard Neff and James Mason.

The Neurasthenic Hero-Victim, the Corsican, the Innocent Man, the Infanticide, the Psychotic—these are not even types but mathematical symbols. With equal accuracy they could be expressed, respectively, in terms of illiteracy and evil conditions—family honour—false accusation—bad housing—brain tumour. They are not sinners but symptoms; and even as symptoms they are insufficiently numerous, insufficiently convincing in themselves, to illustrate the nature of the disease.

The ultimate test of propaganda is the open market; like advertising, its success can only be calculated in terms of sales. Does the propagandist's argument convince? As I left the Curzon cinema after this film, I overheard three young women discussing, with considerable animation, the real problem which they felt had been propounded. This was: Which was worst—to know the date and time of one's execution or to live in ignorance and perpetual anticipation? Perhaps I do M. Cayatte an injustice by suggesting that he has failed in his task if, for his audience, the problem remains hypothetical, if the reaction evoked is simply to query the detail and not the principle. But he will never deeply arouse an audience's sympathy by this sort of sociological crossword puzzle, in which character is sacrificed to polemics. His failure, however, appears only a temporary failure of technique. He is that *rara avis* among film directors, a man with an integrated philosophy of life. Only time can show whether he is a Galsworthy or a Swift; in any case, he may one day make a great film.

FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

Reviewed by Karel Reisz

A few years ago, *The Men* and *Teresa* established Fred Zinnemann as the most vital new director in post-war Hollywood. His work was distinguished by adult, sensitive characterisation and by soberly authentic portrayals of the contemporary American scene. Making his films on a small scale and with little-known or non-professional players, Zinnemann managed to dramatise post-war "problem" situations without glibness or sentimentality. He became an acute and accurate reporter, whose films, made in a mood of rueful urgency, seemed to demand sympathy and understanding of their heroes' problems. Without conventional happy endings, these films closed on a hopeful note and implied—without the glibness that a bald statement of their intentions might suggest—that the problems they raised could be met by personal courage and good will.

From Here to Eternity, in which Zinnemann returns to a war theme after an interval of two years, is made in a very different mood. Adapted and condensed (by Daniel Taradash) from James Jones' novel, it investigates the fierce emotional



Opening in London too late for review is Renoir's "*Le Carrosse d'Or*," in which Anna Magnani gives a brilliant comedy performance as one of a troupe of strolling players.

lives of a group of regular soldiers stationed in a bored, inactive pre-Pearl Harbour Honolulu. A private comes to the unit, haunted by the memory of having blinded his best friend in a boxing contest, and refuses to join the company's team. He is mercilessly bullied by his superiors and finally dies of the knife wounds sustained in a fight with a sadistic sergeant who has beaten his best friend to death in an army prison. The company commander is a corrupt, promotion-hungry careerist, whose wife is deceiving him with his senior sergeant—an affair which ends at the moment the company goes into action. In all, three characters are killed and both the main relationships are ferociously and irretrievably wrecked. In the novel, these events were motivated and cross-indexed by exhaustive character studies, but the film hardly has time to do more than state the facts; the only element which binds it together is the soldiers' repeated avowal of their almost mystical surrender to the ideals and demands of The Army.

This is not a theme that one would expect Zinnemann to approach in the hopeful, sympathetic mood of his earlier films; but neither could one expect the negative shrug of indifference with which he seems to have surrendered to its hysteria. He commits himself to no statement of attitude towards his material and supplies only a kind of opportunist's slickness. The tension is piled up in a series of crescendo scenes, each played at full emotional blast, and only isolated moments of rest—the singing of the blues, Clift's impromptu trumpet solo in the bar—really come alive. For the rest, everything is hard, disillusioned, boringly *blasé* in the suggestion that the film's melodramatics present life as it is lived and that one might as well accept it. Only the character of Prewitt—the independent though loyal private who suffers beatings and humiliations without bitterness and retains his devotion to the army—is shown in any depth. One sees vaguely that the director may have seen Prewitt's situation as a reflection of the impasse in which the independent citizen is placed by present-day political America. But the character is too negative to embody any significant attitude, too involved in the plot's arbitrary melodramatic twists to have any wider validity. Montgomery Clift, though miscast, plays him with his customary intelligence and is well supported by Deborah Kerr—unexpectedly at ease as a sexy blonde—Frank Sinatra, Burt Lancaster and Donna Reed. But, good though much of the acting is, and well though isolated sequences are realised, one never really believes in the world the film depicts. Zinnemann seems much happier with less established players and with simpler, less pretentious stories; and he needs a subject he can believe in.

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Reviewed by Penelope Houston

The conviction that Graham Greene's novels transfer easily to the screen dies very hard, although in one film after another the mainspring has been taken out of his work, the acrid flavour dissipated, the characters neutralised. In tackling *The Heart of the Matter*, George More O'Ferrall, the director, and Ian Dalrymple, the producer and script-writer, have attempted something exceptionally difficult. Attitude and intention count for a good deal more in this novel than incident (it was only on re-reading it, after seeing the film, that I realised, for instance, how arbitrarily Scobie's relationship with the girl is developed); and the climax, involving questions of Confession, Absolution, the state of being, or of not being, in mortal sin, takes the non-Catholic into territory where he may easily lose his bearings. This climax appears to me, in any case, an instance of Graham Greene's habit of backing his leading character into a corner, of check-mating him, as it were, with almost excessive deliberation: one by one the ways of escape are closed, until a resolution which is not really inevitable is made to appear so. Here, as in *The Living Room*, the dénouement conveys despair without tragedy.

The main asset of *The Heart of the Matter* is its transparent honesty of intention: until the evasive and much disputed ending (Scobie, keying himself up to commit suicide, is actually lifting his revolver when providence intervenes, allowing him to be murdered in the course of duty), the film reliably follows the novel in situation and in a good deal of the dialogue. Although the gap between West African locations and studio sets cannot but make itself felt, the setting is plausibly established, the atmosphere of depression, futility and desolation well sustained. This, though, is not quite enough. It would have taken a more single-minded and more ruthless approach to give the film a driving force in its own right, rather than as an adaptation, and to investigate fully Scobie's moral dilemma, the obsessive pity that turns every relationship into a trap, the capacity for self-destruction. Scobie's religion is an ever-present factor in the novel; in the film, understandably, it becomes of paramount importance only in the concluding scenes. The story seems, too abruptly, to transfer itself to another level, a level for which we are unprepared.

These criticisms imply, mainly, the very considerable problems involved in adapting a novel of this type to the commer-

cial cinema. Within its limitations, the film meets them intelligently and honestly: it is never less than respectable. And Trevor Howard brilliantly conveys Scobie's weakness, his despairing compassion and over-powering sense of responsibility. Elizabeth Allan effectively manages the drab, querulous Mrs. Scobie, and Maria Schell, as the girl who brings Scobie to the end of his tether, makes a very pathetic victim of circumstances—though hardly Graham Greene's netball playing schoolgirl from the home counties.

THE PLEASURE GARDEN

Reviewed by William Whitebait

He comes to London. He shows his films. He offers to make a film here, engages support, opens a subscription list, makes his film, and here it is.

The name of this prodigy is James Broughton. He's that rare bird, a poet-cinéaste. Rare? We all, in our better moments, and in recoil from what the screen manufactures, envisage some such film as *The Pleasure Garden*. This is the small, valuable, personal thing; that, the shoddy goods. We should, given the money and opportunity, do what Broughton has done. But we don't. We lack the talent and the persuasion—and don't let's underestimate the latter—without which *The Pleasure Garden* would be out of the question.

My delight that this piece should have arrived, and will in time take its place in repertoire, hasn't, I hope, distracted me from the film itself. This is fresh as a daisy. As I've said, Broughton is a poet, a larky poet whose verses trip with an Elizabethan feeling and a modern vernacular. As the Elizabethan poet tended to compose his own music and to stage masques, so Broughton makes films. His larkiness finds there an added advantage: what the camera sees is so very literal to a poetic eye. In Chaplin, in René Clair, Buster Keaton, Jacques Tati we enjoy on a big scale the fruits of the poetic turned comic. Broughton is of their kind—his *Pleasure Garden* has much in common with *Monsieur Hulot's Holiday*—except that he holds more strongly to feeling, makes short cuts they daren't, sees and sings out of himself, and never dilutes a joke or a movement. *The Pleasure Garden* thus combines, so far as we are concerned, the pleasures of Keystone with the love lyric. He takes a public garden (the Crystal Palace gardens, fallen into beautiful disrepair), and leads there the love-hungry young; they measure themselves against the statues, crash on bicycles into bushes, thaw in top-hats to an unusual music. The bandstand stages a chaste ballet, to the accompaniment of an intense female double-bass player, who at the end clasps her instrument and wanders off through the shrubbery. Of course there are funereal officials to put an end to all larks, and a Good (and fat) Fairy who, brushing away crumbs as she comes out of a fish-and-chip shop, will wave her wand to some effect over those within and without the bounds of temptation. Does this all sound self-conscious fun? It is not. It springs like the lark, and mingles oddity, grace, satire, and laughter without a dead moment. If the fault of Broughton's earlier pieces was that they were private, here he triumphs by being personal in a way we can all understand and enjoy. Cinemas would be gayer if he could be banged into as many programmes, before as many audiences, as possible.

WORLD WITHOUT END

Reviewed by Forsyth Hardy

World Without End is a film in the tradition of *Song of Ceylon* and *The World is Rich*: a proud and important tradition which has given British film-making some of its finest moments. Basil Wright and Paul Rotha were provided by UNESCO with the kind of opportunity which, in the early days of the documentary movement, used to stretch the directors' imagination and resource, and which comes rarely today when enlightened sponsorship of such broad-based films is the exception rather than the rule. They were asked by UNESCO to make a film about how the United Nations and its agencies are tackling the world-wide problems of malnutrition, illiteracy and disease. They could have attempted

an assembly of imposing facts, which might have been impressive and would probably have been exhausting. Instead they went to two countries—Rotha to Mexico and Wright to Thailand—and found their theme by inter-relating efforts to improve the life of the people in lands 10,000 miles apart.

"I am a man myself, and I think that everything which has to do with human beings has something to do with me too". The film opens with this simple yet challenging statement, and sets out to convince us of its truth by taking us first to Mexico and later to Thailand, and showing us how the people, despite their separation and their many differences, have their common hopes and fears, problems and ambitions. In one country the level of the lake is falling and there are fewer and smaller fish: a team of students tries to find ways of improving fishing and farming. In the other, a seemingly incurable disease is making life intolerable in the villages; nurses move into the homes and doctors out into the scattered communities to fight disease and improve health. It is not impossible, the film pleads, to love your neighbour; and, as the world shrinks, the neighbours are closer together. The fisherman in Mexico and the man on the elephant in Siam are not so far apart.

World Without End is a film with the courage of UNESCO's convictions. It believes that the world could be a better place and that the organisations seeking in various practical ways to bring this about are deserving of our support and encouragement. The argument is part emotional, part intellectual in its attack. I would defy anyone to remain unmoved while watching the children of Siam suffering from Yaws, a disease which is curable in a short period by a single injection of penicillin. Children are smiling, the commentary says over pictures of the cured patients, who have seldom or never smiled before. The intellectual argument is concentrated in a postscript which, when I saw the film in Edinburgh, had the feeling of an afterthought, but which may now be more firmly knitted into its texture. There are, the film suggests, three paths in front of mankind: war, which would mean total destruction; continual preparation for war, which would mean less of everything for everybody; and a third path, towards a just and stable peace.

The two directors have lent their matured skill to the most persuasive expression of the theme. The visual movement flows smoothly and easily from one country to another. Rotha may succumb to the irresistible beauty of the Mexican scene and Wright, momentarily, to the mysticism of the East; but the film holds firmly to its course, urged forward by the clear, simple concepts of Rex Warner's commentary, sincerely expressed by Michael Gough.

IN BRIEF

BEAT THE DEVIL (*Independent*) is not the first film to indicate that a fine, fashionable reputation may turn out to be a mixed blessing to an artist. For while it surely owes its indulgent reception in the Press to John Huston's present eminence, it has every appearance of being the work of a



"The Pleasure Garden": Jean Anderson and Hattie Jacques.

THE FIRST GOLDEN AGE

Duncan Crow

talented but fallible director, who has paid too much attention to indiscriminating praise. The film is a burlesque thriller with, at the outset, certain superficial resemblances to *The Maltese Falcon*: the Bogart stereotype in the lead; a gang of mutually mistrustful crooks, headed by a portly, polysyllabic Englishman, and including Peter Lorre; the confused and ruthless pursuit of immeasurable wealth—in this case the acquisition of uranium-bearing land in Africa. But there the resemblances end, and all turns to parody. These crooks are simpletons, and none is more of a booby than their leader; their honest victims turn out to be a couple of crazy impostors, and the prize is finally won by the stupidest character in the story. The idea is an amusing one, but its execution lapses. This kind of comedy calls for finesse, wit and the strictest discipline. *Beat the Devil* has the air of an expensive house-party joke, a charade which enormously entertained its participants at the time of playing, but which is too private and insufficiently brilliant to justify public performance. The script has some good lines, but meanders hopelessly and badly lacks a climax. The acting is at times inexpert, and at times grossly unsubtle. Robert Morley's true comic talent is almost killed by overplaying; Peter Lorre is excellent in an unrewarding part; and Jennifer Jones—an actress plainly less happy in comedy than in strong emotional drama—plays the fantasy-spinning English heroine as if still possessed by the tortured spirit of Ruby Gentry. Huston has been well served by his cameraman, Oswald Morris, but the style of his direction is showy and over-emphatic. One is not asking him to repeat himself, but when one contrasts the pretentious strutting of this film, and *Moulin Rouge*, with the superb incisiveness and dramatic concentration of *The Maltese Falcon*, the conclusion is inescapable that here is a talent going sadly and seriously astray.—Lindsay Anderson.

LES VACANCES DE MONSIEUR HULOT (*Films de France*). Charm is an uncertain gift requiring, for its proper exercise, both luck and humility. It is one of the incalculables of film-making, achieved rather by a series of accidents than by deliberate intention. Which is precisely where Jacques Tati's films score their peculiar triumph, for they seem, in every sense of the word, accidents. Both *Jour de Fête* and *Les Vacances de M. Hulot* give the impression not so much of having been made as of having *happened*. The latter film, in particular, is no more than an album of holiday snapshots taken at a small *plage* near Caen. Yet in spite of, or perhaps because of, its sunny inconsequence, this film does catch the unself-conscious oddness of people out to enjoy themselves.

Whereas Tati's films possess charm he himself, as a film personality, appears charmless. One watches his antics, therefore, without concern, as if he were a performing animal; indeed his physical appearance in each film suggests the non-human in a way that would be inconceivable with Keaton, Langdon, Chaplin or any of the great film clowns. In *Jour de Fête*, wearing a moustache like a hearth brush, he looked like a sad but eccentric retriever; in *M. Hulot*, with his stiff-legged walk and unintelligible mumbling, he reminds one of an amiable, pipe-smoking grasshopper. This non-human quality reveals him to be not a clown but a catalyst. He does not create comic situations but provides the atmosphere in which they occur; his gangling figure acts as a lightning conductor for the unpredictable. This is beautifully illustrated by a scene in *M. Hulot*. The proprietor of the little seaside hotel drops his fountain pen into a small aquarium. With great care he rolls up one sleeve prior to retrieving his pen, and then, his attention momentarily distracted, plunges his other arm into the water.

For his personal comedy Tati, in common with many clowns and comedians, appears to require the struggle with the inanimate; a bicycle and a flag pole in *Jour de Fête*; in this film an antique motor car and an all too collapsible kayak canoe. Yet his relationship to these objects is in no way similar to that of the great film clowns. The difference lies in his attitude, or lack of attitude. For a clown is like those schizophrenics who believe they are possessed by familiar objects—a radio, for example. Tati is unpossessed; he has no demon. He is, rather, an eccentric in the Dickensian sense, an "original", a man of humours. His only equivalent in the cinema would seem to be the late W. C. Fields—Fields of the evil eye, the sinister verbosity and the dry martinis.—David Fisher.

The silver screen, so I learn from the advertisements, is now changing its long familiar shape and is about to move into the golden age. This promise, I presume, is a financial one, for while the new technique will undoubtedly bring considerable wonder and happiness to the local film-goer, there is no reason to suppose that it will be accompanied by any added innocence on the part of the film industry. Even if the alchemy is achieved, however, I cannot imagine that the result will have as profound an effect on the world of film as the transformation that was just beginning when I first went to the cinema twenty-five years ago.

That first visit was no chance occasion. As a Christmas treat, I was taken to London to see the very latest in films at the very latest in cinemas. Just as schoolboys of 1953 may have found themselves—though at a less novel cinema—treated to the grand illusion of the first production filmed in CinemaScope, so I went to the Regal at Marble Arch to share in an earlier illusion. The cinema, which is now called the Odeon, had been opened a week or two before, on November 29th, 1928, complete with every refinement of contemporary decoration and design, all lavishly explained in a souvenir issue of one of the trade papers. Outstanding among these refinements was, of course, the sound equipment; and it was this which made the Regal, together with the new Empire in Leicester Square, the cynosure of the entertainment world.

The programme was no less momentous than the cinema. There was, as far as I can remember, a news-reel, an odd short or two, the lesser novelty of the cinema organ, and then the film we had come to see and to listen to: the pre-release run of Al Jolson in *The Singing Fool*; not the first sound film in point of time, it is true, but certainly the first which gave some indication that the new attraction could be an entertainment as well as a nine days' wonder. As it turned out, the most memorable feature of my outing was an accident with a tram in which we were involved on our way home, so that I have no very clear recollection of what the film was all about. Nevertheless, I know that I was duly appreciative of the importance of my visit and confirmed the trade critics' recommendation to exhibitors that *The Singing Fool* was "first-class sob-stuff that cannot fail to succeed".

My own enchantment with the talkies was not shared by everyone. Under the bevy of names by which they were first known these photophone, phonofilm, vocalised pictures had their critics in many quarters. They were scorned for commercial, for professional and for æsthetic reasons. There was the great additional cost of their production, involving new apparatus, new techniques and new studios, none of which were made cheaper by the fact that the patents were securely vested in a limited number of very business-like hands. There was the reluctance of exhibitors to spend the large sums required for re-equipping their studios. There were the well-founded

Al Jolson in "The Singing Fool"; "... first-class sob-stuff that cannot fail to succeed."



worries of many stars, directors and producers that sound was going to find them lacking in its most essential disciplines. And there were the aesthetes who were torn between the fear that sound would despoil the artistic progress of the film and the hope that it would draw off the "commercialism of moviedom", leaving silent pictures to develop as an independent branch of cinematic art.

There were also, of course, those who simply did not like sound films. Aldous Huxley was one of them. As readers of a recent issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND* will remember, he was introduced to the novelty in Paris in 1929 when he saw Al Jolson in his earlier film, *The Jazz Singer*. Huxley found the experience appalling, and wished that his defective vision could have been supplemented for the occasion by partial deafness, so that he might have been spared the necrophily of the mammy-songsters. Grotesque and horrible as it may have been, however, it was *The Jazz Singer* which acted as the catalyst of the cinema's last golden age. It was, wrote one reviewer of the time, "*a cinematic sport, born of the financial desperation of an erratic producing company*"; but it was a sport which, before long, was to determine the new nature of its species. It caught the public fancy, became the world's newest wonder and, most important, paid off in hard cash to the tune of some million dollars.

Sound, no more than colour or the third dimension, did not burst upon the cinema without warning. Indeed A. C. Bromhead, who in 1928 was chairman of the Gaumont-British Picture Corporation, recalled in his "Reminiscences of the British Film Trade" that as early as 1906 the Gaumont Company had an elementary machine known as a Chronophone, which achieved the distinction of giving a Command Performance at Buckingham Palace. This was a mere curiosity, however, and

it was not until the middle of the 1920's that synchronised sound moved into the field of practical entertainment. The pioneers in its use were Warner Brothers, who, in 1926, synchronised the background music of their *Don Juan*, and William Fox, who began at about the same time to produce Movietone News. There were also other experiments in "packaging" sound with films, but Hollywood as a whole was in fair financial shape and most of the companies saw no point in risking their substantial profits on expensive luxuries. Before long they had no option. In 1927 Warner Brothers, whose situation now demanded some Napoleonic step if they were to survive as a major company, decided to take the gamble. They bought the rights of the Vitaphone system, signed up Al Jolson from the musical comedy stage—paying him partly in money and partly in shares of the sound system—and made *The Jazz Singer*, which, although it had little more than a line or two of spoken dialogue in addition to its songs, had quite enough sound to disprove the old maxim that it is silence which is golden. The transformation had begun.

II

Although it is a delicate point to decide, it seems that the honour of being the first all-talking dialogue picture belongs to *The Terror*, which was Press-shown in this country towards the end of October, 1928. The film, made by Warners, was based on an Edgar Wallace story and, to judge by the reviews, it succeeded only in being bizarre where it should have been exciting—for its use of sound was so amateurish as to destroy all continuity. Despite its clumsiness, however, it deserves its place in history.

The Terror was followed by *The Singing Fool* (also from Warners) and then by a Universal production, *The Melody of Love*, which the critical "Close Up" magazine



"Broadway Melody"; made in 1929, and the most celebrated of the early sound musicals.

considered to be the first real talking picture worthy of the name, because its direction, editing and imaginative use of sound raised it above the novelty level. These three feature films, together with *Home-Towners* (Warners), *The Jazz Singer*, of course, and a small handful of others were all that this country saw and heard of the talkies in 1928, so that there was possibly some justification for those many members of the British film industry who regarded the whole thing as a passing craze, and were sternly taken to task in the more prophetic paragraphs of the trade Press for their ostrich-like behaviour.

But while there was indifference in Europe, there was no time for doubt in Hollywood. With over 900 American cinemas already wired for sound (as against only six in this country), the end of 1928 found no less than seventy sound features in various stages of production, as well as numerous shorts and featurettes. Even so there were divided opinions as to the most effective method of using sound. In one version of Douglas Fairbanks' *Man in the Iron Mask*, for instance, there was no dialogue spoken by the actors, but the sound story was told through the voice of a single off-screen commentator. And I well remember seeing *The Four Feathers*—not the colour version of 1939, but a black and white film produced by Paramount-Lasky ten years earlier—in which, although there was no dialogue, the fearsome Fuzzy Wuzzys were defeated to a full background accompaniment of "all the pops, groans, whistles, smacks, hisses, grunts, creaks, hoots, whines, howls and yelps which", in the words of a contemporary critic, "punctuate musical scores". The reason for this hybrid use of sound effects and captions, I have since discovered, was that Adolph Zukor and Jesse L. Lasky had decided after seeing the rough-cut that dialogue would slow down the action.

This limitation of sound to music and effects only was not unusual during 1929. In many cases, however, the restraint was occasioned not by a discriminating sense of

A scene from "The Four Feathers" (1929); the film was directed by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schroedsack (who had previously made "Chang"), and starred Richard Arlen, Fay Wray, Clive Brook and William Powell.

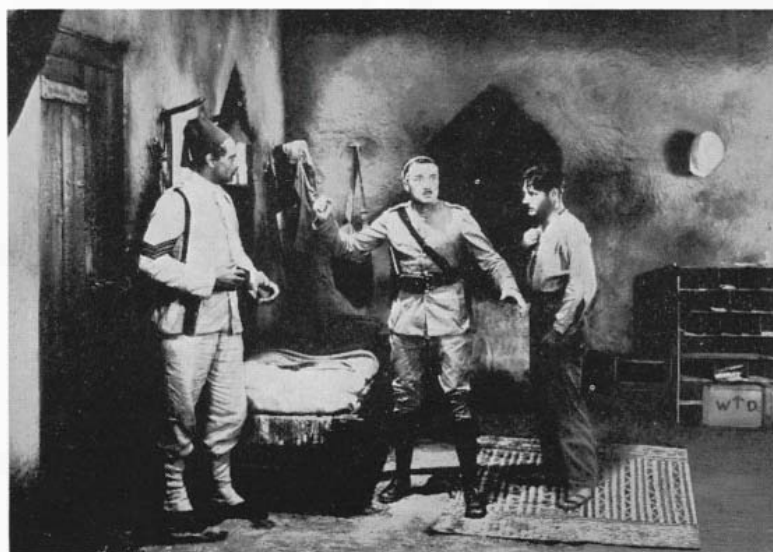
when to use the new technique, but by the inadequacy of dialogue writers, actors, directors and editors in coping with it. Furthermore there still had to be a silent version of every film if it was to get adequate screening, and it was easier to make these versions of films which did not rely too greatly on dialogue for the development of the story.

Despite their faults and failures, the talkies steadily gained ground, and the final arbiter, as always, was the public. For most of 1929, those exhibitors who were unwilling or unable to risk their capital on the installation of the new equipment could fob off their customers with the mumbled explanation that the sound systems were still in their prototype stage, that there were only a small number of films available on each system, that the films made on one system could not be screened on another. There was much basic truth in this argument, and no doubt it has a present application at the advent of the second golden age. The public, however, was not interested in dialectics or economics. What it wanted was the new excitement of the talking pictures, which could attend to all the subtleties of the human emotions; and behind the public were the big battalions who controlled the patent-rights of sound.

Although several British-owned sound systems were in the process of development or establishment at this period, the main strength was in the hands of three groups. Two of these were American—the Western Electric Company, a subsidiary of the mammoth American Telephone and Telegraph Company, which incorporated Vitaphone; and the R.C.A. Photophone Company, which belonged to the equally powerful Radio Corporation of America—while the third group was German, for this was the time when Germany was recovering her pre-1914 position as the leading exporter of electrical apparatus and machinery. In July, 1930, the three groups made an international pact dividing the world markets between them and opening the way for the interchangeability of films on different systems. The transformation, had it ever been in doubt, was now assured.

III

It seems to be generally agreed among the industry, its Press and its historians that a year or so before the introduction of the talkies in this country there was a



decline in public interest in the cinema, which was reflected in a marked drop in the attendance level. In one opinion the reason for this decline was "*largely because American films had become stereotyped and lacked variety*," and it was American films that occupied over 95 per cent of the screen time. In all fairness, however, there is no need to insist upon the nationality of the films, for the moribund British production industry had little to its credit in those days.

To determine the attendance level at this period and to gauge the effect that the talkies had on it is a matter of some difficulty. Until recent years there has been a lack of official statistics of most aspects of the film industry, and it was not until 1950 that the Board of Trade started collecting and publishing quarterly attendance figures. The available figures for earlier years, therefore, are only estimates of varying reliability, some relating to Great Britain only, others to the United Kingdom, and others again to the whole of the British Isles. If they were all to be taken at their face value, the rate of cinema-going in the 1920's and early 1930's would appear to have been subject to very erratic annual fluctuations; and there is now every reason to believe that this is not a true characteristic.

In the early days of the cinema, it was, of course, to the industry's advantage to inflate the size of its audience figures not only for publicity purposes but also to encourage investment; and I have no doubt that estimates giving the weekly rate as some 18-20 millions for 1920 and 1925 are considerably too high; a more reasonable figure, I think, would be 14-15 million. In any case, the level seems to have been fairly steady over that period. It was in 1927 that the first references to a falling-off of business began to appear, and in due course the word "slump" was used. But while there is no doubt that a downward trend had set in, the evidence given by registrations of new exhibiting companies, large capital flotations and the building of new cinemas (amounting to more than 1,000 in the seven years 1925-1931) suggests that it was not "a serious squeeze".

Just as the decline may have been exaggerated, so the revival that was set in motion by the talkies has been variously estimated. One book published in 1932 credited the new attraction with a revolutionary effect on



The early talkie : Basil Rathbone and Norma Shearer in a scene from "The Last of Mrs. Cheyney" (1929).

the attendance level. It gave a weekly rate of 26,400,000, and went on somewhat fallaciously to deduce that "*more than half the total population* (figures which include the aged, infirm and infants) *go to the 'pictures' every week! This probably means that at least three-quarters of the adult population see a 'talkie' every week of their lives*". The purpose of using such a high figure was certainly not to encourage investment, as may be gathered from the title of the book "The Devil's Camera—Menace of a Film-Ridden World", with its dedication to "*the ultimate sanity of the white races*". A more reasonable estimate for that year was 18½ million, but even that must be on the high side if we are to believe the Board of Trade calculation that the figure was only 17.6 million in 1936, for in the intervening four years the trend was definitely upwards.

Whatever the figures, it was some time before the talkies became sufficiently widespread to have any general effect on the box-office. Individual cinemas flourished during 1929, but for the majority the year was one when the pie was still in the sky; nevertheless, by the end of the year 625 cinemas had switched to sound, and a year later the number had risen to more than 3,000.

IV

The coming of sound was only one part of the transformation, and although in 1928 and 1929 it was the aspect which caught the public eye it was really the one of lesser importance. Of much greater consequence for the future of the British film industry was the fact that, twelve months before my visit to *The Singing Fool*, the first Cinematograph Films Act had been passed. This Act, in keeping with the watchwords of the time, introduced quotas and made it obligatory for both renters and exhibitors to do part of their business in British films. The initial percentages were small. The renters' quota for the first year (which began in April, 1928) was 7½ per cent, while the exhibitors' quota (which came into force six months later) was only 5 per cent. These quotas

(Continued on page 168)



Alfred Hitchcock's "Blackmail" (1929) : the first British sound film.

A FILM QUIZ

Questions for enthusiasts—to be answered with or without recourse to reference books. The maximum number of points that can be obtained is 115, and we offer a first prize of a two guinea book token for the best entry, with two prizes of guinea book tokens to runners-up. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be decided by a draw. The closing date for entries is February 12th, and answers to the Quiz will be published in the April/June issue of SIGHT AND SOUND.

1. In what Joan Crawford film did the star (a) hide in a cupboard (b) go to prison on a false accusation of street-walking (c) walk into the sea in evening dress (d) join the French Resistance (e) go blind and recover after an operation (f) suffer hallucinations that she had murdered her step-daughter (g) play a Congresswoman (h) seduce a religious maniac?
(8 points)
2. The following novels are famous for the number of times they have been filmed. Which has been filmed most often? (a) *Les Misérables* (b) *Crime and Punishment* (c) *Carmen* (d) *Quo Vadis* (e) *Oliver Twist*.
(1 point)
3. Believe It Or Not Department:
(a) In 1929 Louise Brooks starred in a film scripted by René Clair from a story by G. W. Pabst. Can you give the title and the director?
(b) In 1928 Mauritz Stiller made a film from a script by Josef von Sternberg, starring Emil Jannings and Fay Wray. Do you know the title?
(3 points)
4. What do the following films have in common: *Une Femme Disparait*, *Derby Day*, *Europa 51*, *The Lady from Shanghai*, *Der Traumende Mund*, *Madeleine*, *The Pirate*?
(1 point)
5. What distinguished men and women of letters have been impersonated in films by the following players?
(a) James Mason (b) Ida Lupino (c) Merle Oberon (d) Dennis Price (e) Sidney Greenstreet (f) Norma Shearer (g) Robert Harris.
(7 points)
6. Music Department:
Do you know (a) What was the origin of the main theme used as incidental music for *Frenchman's Creek*? (b) What was the title and who was the composer of the main theme in *City Lights*? (c) What was the well-known Spanish tune used in *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman*? (d) What was the work played by Myra Hess in Humphrey Jennings' *Listen to Britain*? (e) What was the overture conducted by Cary Grant in *People Will Talk*? (f) Which opera provided some of the background music for *L'Age d'Or*? (g) Name three films which have featured the Tchaikowsky Piano Concerto No. 1.
(7 points)
7. Several famous stars of the silent period are still acting in films, or have recently made screen comebacks. The stills below are from films released within the last five years. Can you identify (a) the player (b) the film?
(8 points)
8. The first time various well-known novels and plays were filmed, they retained their original titles. The second time, their titles were changed. Can you trace the originals from these titles of their second versions?
(a) *The Breaking Point* (b) *The Law and the Lady* (c) *Rich Man's Folly* (d) *Escape in the Desert* (e) *Trouble for Two* (f) *The Right to Live* (g) *Summer Holiday* (h) *A Place in the Sun* (i) *The House in the Square*.
(9 points)
9. Each profession listed below was practised by a now famous film director before he went into films. Can you name the directors?
(a) Potter (b) Journalist (c) Painter (d) Cavalry Officer (e) Music Hall Clown (f) Film Critic (g) Geologist (h) Theatre Actor (i) Theatre Dancer (j) Lawyer.
(10 points)
10. What was the first full-length dramatic silent film without a single subtitle?
(1 point)
11. There is a connection between the following names and the following films. Can you connect each name with a different film, and specify the connection?
Robert Hamer; Luis Bunuel; David O. Selznick; David Lean; Joseph L. Mankiewicz; John Huston; Marcel Carné; Fred Zinnemann; E. A. Dupont; Claude Autant-Lara; Graham Greene.
Anna Karenina; *Forgotten Faces*; *Our Daily Bread*; *Sous les Toits de Paris*; *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*; *La Chute de la Maison Usher*; *Jamaica Inn*; *All Quiet on the Western Front*; *Escape me Never*; *Went the Day Well*; *Nana*.
(22 points)
12. Do you know in what films the following lines of dialogue occur?
(a) "Don't, John, you're crushing me!"
(b) "Stop the pumps!"
(c) "I have always depended on the kindness of strangers."
(d) "It is usual to have clean linen on your honeymoon."
(e) "I have found a greater loyalty than Rome—humanity."
(f) "We are neither of us free to love each other, there is too much in the way. There's still time, if we control ourselves and behave like sensible human beings. . . ."
(g) "So long, Toulouse".
(h) "How do you stand those dreadful women even *once* a year?"
(8 points)





13. Several famous directors were once actors, others make occasional screen appearances. Can you identify from the stills above (a) the director (b) the film?
(8 points)

14. Do you know for what films the following publicity slogans were used?
(a) The Film that Begs to Differ.
(b) If you were _____, would you keep your mouth shut?
(c) Father and Son Betrayed by the Same Woman.
(d) Whisper Her Name.
(e) She's the kind of woman most men want—but shouldn't have!
(f) See this film with Someone you love very much.
(g) There never was a woman like _____.
(h) There never was a man like _____.
(8 points)

15. The following are extracts from reviews of notable films by notable critics, past and present. Can you identify the critics?
(a) (On *The Garden of Allah*) "Alas! my poor church, so picturesque, so noble, so superhumanly pious, so intensely dramatic. I really prefer the *New Statesman* view, shabby priests counting pesetas on their fingers in dingy cafés before blessing tanks. Even the liqueur made at this Trappist monastery is Mysterious."
(b) (On *Monsieur Verdoux*) "For this idea of Chaplin's is a satirical one, and satire and tears don't mix. *Monsieur Verdoux* only incidentally, and at moments wanly, amuses. The dapper, dangerously poised hero skates on thin ice that fascinates by its very thinness: a quite different sensation from what we are used to in Chaplin's films. One dreads the lapse in a performance that was once all lapses. It doesn't, I may say, come."
(c) (On *Brief Encounter*) "Nothing the producers can contrive to do is going to make *Brief Encounter* an understandable film for the practical millions. But for a very

few people it will remain what might be called a bedside film, to be taken out and relished to one's heart's content; to be familiarised and loved; to be seen, and savoured, in quietness, over and over again."

(d) (On *The Childhood of Maxim Gorky*) "These people live, every one of them; they illuminate our own childhood memories and we know that it is all true. Here the high tensility of courage withstands the stupid meanness, the stupid slyness, the chicanery and greed. Every one of young Gorky's family lives precariously, their warm generous impulses distorted by the dominating and fantastically difficult task of getting enough bread to eat. . . . *The Childhood of Maxim Gorky* is not only the truest interpretation of a book by movie . . . but is one of the three greatest films ever made."

(e) (On *l'Atalante*) "But the singular talent—for once I think I may say genius—of the film lies in its translation into visual images of the mysterious and terrible and piteous undertones of even the simplest human life. And when I say visual images I do not mean that Vigo went outside the realistic for illustration; the poetry of this interpretation of life is conveyed without any recourse to extravagant symbolism."

(f) (On *M*) "Lang has, as usual, peeped into his big subject and been satisfied with a glimpse. The best that can be said for the film is that no other director one knows of would have thought of the Dusseldorf murderer for his hero. In this Lang shares honours with Dostoevsky and the best of them. But Lang has only thought of his subject; he has not felt it. *M*, like *Frankenstein*, is a full-blown tragedy that has been diminished in the creation to a mere 'sensational'."

(6 points)

16. Who is or was (a) The "It" Girl (b) The "Oomph Girl" (c) The Look (d) The Voice (e) The Man you Love to Hate (f) The Last Tycoon (g) The Blonde Bombshell (h) The Most Beautiful Girl in the World?
(8 points)

(REPORT ON THE "X" continued from page 124)
prepared—

"To address a warning to the people who play this game that if they persist, then they can wreck it. . . . *We are taking the greatest care to ensure that nothing bad is seen in an 'X' film* (our italics)—it merely means that if they go on exploiting it, the industry cannot be trusted with the 'X' category."

When the Board introduced the "X" category three years ago, it appeared as a liberal measure, designed to ensure that serious adult films would reach the public; and experience has undoubtedly proved the value of the "X". But the way in which a small and irresponsible section of the industry has handled the certificate fully

justifies Mr. Watkins' warning to the trade. In the circumstances, local authorities and watch committees can scarcely be blamed for their apparent suspicions, and the Board itself is being forced into a difficult position. It may happen that the censor will feel it necessary to impose cuts less because he believes the film will offend "reasonably minded members of the audience", than because he is afraid of the way in which the picture will be commercially exploited. If this should happen, the professed intentions of the "X" certificate would be seriously undermined. It may be suggested that the time has come for the Cinema Consultative Committee to review the situation.

HOW TO BE A FILM EXHIBITOR

Cinema owners and managers are suffering considerably at present from the economic circumstances of the industry; an exhibitor sends us this comment on the situation.

The first essential for this desirable occupation is to buy a cinema. Nothing could be simpler. Mr. Rank may not be willing to sell you his local Odeon or Gaumont, but there are many other gentlemen with desirable premises who will be only too glad to accommodate you. It is only necessary to consult the various Trade journals that cater for those whose living is derived from the film industry. Each week these papers modestly display advertisements that are worded something after this fashion—

FOR SALE. Kinema in the finest position in one of the most thriving towns. Present takings very satisfactory and capable of vast improvement under individual ownership. Substantial profits over a number of years. Present owner retiring. Premium for goodwill and valuable contents only £. . . .

What could be fairer than that? Contact the present owner (or preferably his agent, as agents also must live) and in no time at all the Cinema will be yours. So now you own a cinema, and if you have conducted your negotiations skilfully there should also be two or more projectors, some seats for the customers, a screen, and other mechanical odds and ends.

Having acquired your Cinema, it is considered in some circles that the next thing to do is to book films. This attitude is quite wrong and shows an out-of-date appreciation of modern show business requirements.

As any live-wire film tycoon will tell you, your next job is to arrange your SALES. SALES is a generic term covering ice-cream, peanuts, salted almonds, popcorn, and any other eatable product that guarantees a profit of fifty per cent. Do not bother with cigarettes or chocolates. Customers may ask for them but the profit is negligible. Ice-cream is the best bet, unless you have bought a high class hall with high class patrons who won't eat ice-cream in case it drips on to their clothes. With such fussy people, nuts or popcorn is the best substitute.

Only when you are quite sure that the foyer of your cinema looks like a super confectioners need you turn your attention to booking films. Experience has shown that even the most inveterate ice-cream consumers in cinemas are inclined to get a little edgy if their attention is not from time to time distracted by something appearing on the screen.

Film booking is laughably easy. All you do is to sit in your office and wait for the salesmen to call. You will be surprised at the number of salesmen who will call.

These salesmen are very nice people, without exception. They have one mission in life, and that is to make you a profit. They will tell you so, and you would be churlish not to believe them. The product they have to offer is, also without exception, sensational. They will shower synopses and Press sheets all over your desk, proving that every single film took more money in Ashby-de-la-Zouch than any other film ever made. Should you be so inconsiderate as to mention that you are not Ashby-de-la-Zouch but Burton-on-Trent (or wherever you may be), they will quickly point out that every one of their films took more money in Yarm-on-Tees than *The Birth of a*

Nation took in Sowerby Bridge in 1915.

By the time these opening gambits have exhausted themselves, you are likely to find a contract appearing like magic on your desk, or more likely, by this time, on the saloon bar of the Local. This is a critical moment because, though all the films offered to you are certain to make you a huge profit, there is still the purely formal routine of agreeing terms.

Do not fear that you will offend the salesman's finer instincts by discussing terms with him. The salesman knows exactly what he expects to get from you, but will welcome the chance of arguing the point in the hope that he will get more. After about the fourth double Scotch he will indicate that he wants to help you, that his company has always had the welfare of the little man at heart, and that as he wants a satisfied customer on his books he will only ask a nominal forty per cent of the weekly takings for each of the two dozen super productions he is privileged to offer.

Under the pretence of offering another drink, you do some quick mental arithmetic, and find that by paying forty per cent one or all of three things will happen. You won't be able to pay wages to your staff (in which case their Union will call a strike); you won't be able to pay the Entertainment Tax collected from your patrons (in which case you will be prosecuted by the Treasury); you won't be able to pay yourself any salary (in which case you had better become a film salesman).

As the latter prospect cannot be contemplated, and as you do not want strikes or a prison sentence, you make the salesman a counter offer of £10 a week flat for each picture, take it or leave it. As he has already mentally agreed with himself to accept £7 10s. 0d., he will probably take it.

So now you are all set. You have ordered ice-creams and films. Your opening date is duly publicised as the greatest event in the history of the town. You have invited the Mayor and Miss Diana Dors to the opening ceremony. There is nothing to do now but to warn the Bank to expect heavy daily deposits. You are about to wrap everything up and go home when a mysterious visitor walks in.

Although he ignores you completely, he seems to know his way around. From an inside pocket he produces a torch and departs on an inspection of the entire premises. Eventually he reappears to inform you that your Licence will not be granted at the next Sessions unless you (a) re-carpet the whole cinema, (b) install auxiliary lighting inside and outside, and (c) remove two-thirds of the seats and replace them with new ones that will not precipitate the customers on to the floor when they sit down.

He goes away and you do a little figuring. You then take a piece of paper and draft an advertisement for the Trade papers that will read something like this—

FOR SALE. Kinema in the finest position in one of the most thriving towns. Present owner retiring, etc.,
EDWIN BOND.



Hollywood angels ; left, Henry Travers consoles James Stewart in a scene from Capra's "It's a Wonderful Life"; right, Cary Grant plays the visitor from Heaven in "The Bishop's Wife."



THE ANGEL, THE DEVIL AND THE SPACE TRAVELLER

Variations on a traditional theme

David Fisher

At the age of four, so it is said, William Blake saw God peering in at an attic window; and, indeed, throughout his life he seems to have been beset by angels, spirits and similar manifestations. In our own time, in California, Mr. George Adamski reports that he is dogged by flying saucers and men from Venus. But in this, as in so many things, art surpasses reality. Angels, devils and Things that never were except on the Mars of a film-writer's mind—things far weirder than Mr. Adamski's long-haired space-travellers—abound. Visitants from other worlds, whether mystic or merely imaginary, have become a twentieth-century myth.

A study of the popular cinema and drama from 1930 onwards reveals a Blake-like or Adamskian preoccupation with the sub-, ab- and super-human—a preoccupation which reached its height during and immediately after the war. It was a time when spiritualism boomed, a time for reassurance. The numerous films and plays on the subject of Heaven, the Dead, Angelic and Diabolic interference, and so forth, represent simply another aspect of that movement which produced the series of memorable war films. In their different ways, both the documentaries and the fantasies satisfied this desire for reassurance: the one a wish to escape from, the other to examine and be reassured by, the facts of war. Death did not mean an absolute end; our men and machines engaged in the war were superior to those of the enemy: such was the burden of these films. And rightly so, for, ultimately, the purpose of all popular art is to soothe and palliate its public—a function which can best be explained in terms of human desires and limitations, without invoking the Freudian hob-goblins of wish-fulfilment, etc. Not poppy, nor mandragora, but the cinema; it is the greatest and most immediate of palliatives: truly the opium of the masses. Since the advent of science fiction, however, this

opium has given birth to some curious hallucinations.

In recent years the Archangel Gabriel and the Men from Planet, X, Y or Z have vied with each other as the latest "gimmick" of the popular writer, the contemporary *deus ex machina*. (This battle, I must report, has now swung decisively in favour of the space-traveller.) The idea of the god out of the machine remains unaltered, though he himself has undergone many metamorphoses. With the coming of Christianity he became the Good and Evil Angels of the morality play; with the sentimentalisation of Christianity he became the Stranger from "The Passing of the Third Floor Back" and the Psychiatrist of "The Cocktail Party". And his metamorphoses are not yet complete. Flying saucer and space helmet have replaced wings and cloven hooves or the lounge suit of a certain type of Hollywood visitant. Personally, I find this last metamorphosis refreshing. But then anything is perhaps preferable to the coyness of Edmund Gwenn, for instance, as an Angel, or the cuteness of Robert Cummings as the Archangel Michael.

II

The vindication of the angelic convention embodied in the lounge suit and the smart wisecrack is to be found, strangely enough, in Dionysius the Areopagite (Celestial Hierarchy): "*It is permissible to depict forms which are appropriate to the Celestial Beings*", for "*throughout the whole range of matter there are some echoes of the spiritual comeliness*". One may, however, question whether the present, happily fast-waning convention does not catch too few echoes of the "spiritual comeliness" to justify itself even theologically.

I have suggested that the origin of the particular convention with which I am concerned here can be found in the popular drama of the 30's and 40's. But this should not be understood to imply that I think those years were

rich in plays of high quality; on the contrary. Eager to exploit the taste for fantasy, the dramatist of that period was unwilling—or unable—to crack the corset of naturalism which had been clamped on the theatre at the beginning of the century. And so angels, devils, and any other visitants tended to wear lounge suits—and American accents.

The supernatural—the relationship of man to his demons and angels—is the most ancient theme in any art. Yet few films have succeeded in overcoming the principal problem in portraying the supernatural: how to illustrate effectively the nature of non-human forces. Marlowe, for instance, when Faustus invokes Mephistopheles, makes the demon appear in a shape too horrible for Faustus to contemplate. Faustus bids Mephistopheles return in a form he can bear to look upon. The demon then appears as an Elizabethan, dressed in the Elizabethan equivalent of a lounge suit. This *coup de théâtre* serves to remind the audience that Mephistopheles is a creature from the Pit, only temporarily human in appearance. One feels that as soon as he has dragged Faustus off to Hell he will resume the lineaments of some archetypal image of evil.

A similar though more subtle device is employed in William Dieterle's *All That Money Can Buy*. The non-human nature of Scratch, the Devil (a virtuoso performance by the late Walter Huston) is illustrated when he opens his pocket book and a moth flies out—the soul of a miser—which he wraps in a large red kerchief. The symbol of the moth and the man, insect and human, reveals the supernatural quality of Scratch who, in spite of his seeming humanity, is alien to the human world and makes his victims alien also. As a film and as an essay in the Faust theme, *All That Money Can Buy* is only partly successful. Based on Stephen Benet's "The Devil and Daniel Webster", it is an attempt at the folk-tale—an extremely difficult genre—and exploits, without much conviction, all the traditional paraphernalia. Technically, it suffers from too many studio sets; one longs for a few location shots that would establish the never-never land of New England as a place where people live, work and die. But nonetheless, the film does possess an odd, unexpected magic; the result, I suspect, of creating a devil who satisfies the conventions of the folk-tale; a devil who steals peach pies and causes hail storms, a devil who might occasionally stoop to curdling milk: a familiar rustic devil.

The most recent piece of Faustiana—it might be described as a series of variations on the Faust theme—is René Clair's ingenious but disappointing *La Beauté du Diable*. This interesting, often exciting, film makes a bold attempt to re-tell the story in the terms of an eighteenth century *conte philosophique*, a form and a century in which Clair seems to feel particularly at home; indeed it would be true to say that all his recent films are set in the climate of the age of Voltaire. In *La Beauté du Diable*, his tragic hero is not Faust but Mephistopheles. Instead of Faust's damnation, caught in the bear trap of his own desires, it is Mephistopheles who is destroyed; it is *his* gold that turns to sand, *him* against whom the people turn in fear and hatred. But for all Clair's ingenuity, for all the sense of intellectual excitement, the film seems arid and lacking in gaiety or any real emotion; reminiscent, rather, of a sub-standard novel by Anatole France. It possesses characteristic charm, and also a

certain graciousness; but it lacks the fundamental seriousness of the *conte philosophique*.

The treatment of the demon, Mephistopheles, is purposely conventional. Cloaked, and with a suggestion of horns, Gerard Philipe looks the part of the story-book demon, like one of those cut-out figures designed for a toy theatre. The creation of this puppet figure, and its immediate acceptance by the audience, enables Clair to achieve a striking dramatic effect. When Faust decides to sell his soul for youth and knowledge, the demon and the man change shapes—the demon becoming old and bent, Faust young and handsome as the devil. But the potentialities of this fascinating transformation are not explored; it is employed merely as one variant on the theme. And, having discovered a vein of pure gold, the film then contents itself with creating charming, *Faubourg-St. Honoré* trinkets.

The scene where Mephistopheles, at Faust's command, shows him the future in the mirror is paralleled exactly in Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*. Here the angel, whose duty it is to prove the truth of the film's title to the hero, grants him a vision of what would have happened to the people he loved had he not been born. Where Clair expressed the future in a series of visual epigrams, Capra explores it like a blind man groping for the obvious. Although the sequence fails through lack of taste—at times it descends almost to bathos—it does possess a certain dramatic force. It is not just a clever trick but helps to illuminate the "otherness" of the Angel who, this apart, belongs to the lounge-suit convention. In this otherwise indifferent film Capra comes nearest, I think, to achieving the modern American folk-tale; to which end he has for years devoted his talents. His heroes, from Harry Langdon to Gary Cooper and James Stewart, though lacking innocence (Capra has too often mistaken inexperience for innocence) are simple and pure in heart, lost in the great American dream of a small-town boy. They are Capra's equivalent of the cobbler's son and the swine-herd who is a prince. Out of this mixture of the phoney and the genuine, Capra in this film creates an atmosphere which almost imbues a threadbare convention with new dramatic life.

III

One must differentiate between the incidentally and the intrinsically supernatural. Into the former category fall such films as *Heaven Can Wait* (Lubitsch), *Les Visiteurs du Soir* (Carné), *Les Jeux Sont Fait* (Delannoy), etc. *For Heaven's Sake* (George Seaton), *A Matter of Life and Death* (Powell and Pressburger), and *Orphée*, for instance, must be placed in the second category. The difference between these two categories is one of degree only, apart from any other æsthetic distinctions which might be made.

Of the three films I have mentioned which are concerned exclusively with the supernatural, only *Orphée* is worth serious consideration. This is a further film version of Cocteau's favourite theme: Death and the Poet. *Orphée* (a play) and *Le Sang d'un Poète* (his first film) were early essays on the subject. A critical comparison of the three works would be extremely valuable; it would reveal the development of the ideas of a modern creative artist—among them Cocteau's conception of the nature and rôle of the Angel, for there is a considerable difference between the Heurtebise of the play and the Heurtebise of the film. And it would do much to illuminate the



The Devil in films ; left, Michel Simon in " *La Beauté du Diable* " ; centre, Jules Berry in " *Les Visiteurs du Soir* " ; right, Walter Huston, the "familiar rustic devil" of " *All that Money Can Buy*."

differences between two, if not three, media—the theatre, the *film surréaliste* and the poetic film.

In *Orphée*, a modern version of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, Cocteau adopts what is virtually the lounge-suit convention of the supernatural, but with one important difference. Although Heurtebise dresses as a chauffeur and looks a normal young man, we see him also in the Underworld, the world to which he belongs. The Underworld lies beyond the mirror—a symbol which is employed with the exactness of Lewis Carroll or a voodoo worshipper. It is, therefore, physically similar to our world, but governed by unknown laws. We thus accept both worlds because they are separated by a symbol. Another example: Death drives in a handsome limousine, flanked by two motor-cyclists (the familiar convention); yet in that scene in the deserted, sunlit market, to which Orpheus follows Death, she vanishes mysteriously among the columns. The scene recalls the atmosphere of Chirico's early paintings and, both in itself and by suggestion, accentuates the ordinariness of Death and her trappings, and also her "otherness". Cocteau contrives, therefore, always to insert a strangeness between two realities, which throws them both into relief and so reveals something of the nature of the supernatural.

IV

Science fiction is a hybrid, descended partly from the old horror film and partly from fantasy. Theoretically the combination of horror and fantasy, if successful, does promise to be not only an irresistible box-office attraction, but also good cinema. At the moment, however, too many of these films suffer from a schizophrenia, a duality which prevents them from fulfilling their initial promise. They tend to be either too horrific or too disorganised; which suggests that the genre is not yet established.

The Thing, for instance, was really a horror film; *The Day the Earth Stood Still* a fantasy. One cannot, however, place *The Magnetic Monster* or *It Came From Outer Space* in either category. The difference lies in the nature and role of the visitants. The "intellectual carrot", the Thing, is employed not to examine the reactions of the

human beings with whom it comes in contact, but simply to make the audience's flesh creep. (Until that moment when the vegetable—visually a most disappointing monster—is actually seen, the film hovers on the edge of a new genre; but from then onwards it becomes a routine shocker.) The space-traveller of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* occupies a rôle similar to that of the Stranger in Jerome K. Jerome's play: a figure within the popular convention. The treatment of the walking eye-balls from outer space, on the other hand, anticipates a new convention. These visitants possess something of the air of the alien and the unknown; they, like the mysterious element in *The Magnetic Monster*, are unmistakably non-human. The eye-balls who—or perhaps, more grammatically, which—emerge from the flying meteorite, belong to the half world of the child's nightmare: they are *things*.

It is too early to say whether the science fiction film will effect a radical metamorphosis of the *deus ex machina*; although it seems likely that we are in for a period of non-human visitants from outer space or from the bottom of the sea, as well as for a series of films celebrating cataclysms of a cosmic nature. This movement promises, if not to produce films of any great artistic merit, at least to ensure that the potentialities of the cinema are employed. It would be a considerable achievement to have broken away from the artificial sophistication of the kitchen and drawing room comedy; it would be a greater achievement still to break with the convention of the Hollywood angel and the Hollywood devil.

I am not suggesting that walking eye-balls, for instance, would not in time become as banal as the lounge-suited visitant or Frankenstein's familiar figure. The visual presentation of the supernatural and the unknown has always been improbably unimaginative in the popular cinema. But the science fiction film does demand a fresh visual approach on the part of director and writer; it demands the scrapping of old conventions and the creation of new ones. It offers a world which, visually, is less bound by tradition than that of the Western, and it yet retains something of the Western's gift for myth-making. The god out of the machine may yet become a sort of Redskin of the Nebulæ.

The "Other" Cinema BACKGROUND TO THE INDIAN FILM

From time to time, SIGHT AND SOUND publishes articles on "the other cinema"—on the industries of those countries in Eastern Europe, in Africa and in Asia whose films are little known beyond their own frontiers. In this article, an Indian critic and film-maker comments on the history of the industry in his country.

It is not without some irony that the second largest film industry in the world, after the United States of America, should be one of the least known. Few Englishmen—or for that matter Czechs or Frenchmen—have ever seen an Indian film or heard of an Indian film star. The reason is not far to seek; the complacent Indian film producer, content with a vast home market, has never turned his eyes Westwards. Indian entries in World Film Festivals have been few. On the other hand, the distributor in the West is so slightly informed, or so misinformed, that he considers it wisest to leave well alone. Typical examples of Western misinforma-



tion, it seems to me, are found in a recent article by Taya Zinkin in *The Manchester Guardian*.

Whatever the reason, it is certain that there is a heavy "celluloid curtain" between the Indian film and the Western distributor. Little effort has been made on either side to give the Western reader an exact and objective account of Indian film production. With this object in view, I am going to state a few facts about the industry, its origin and growth, shape and size, and the potentialities of the medium in a country where a large section of the population lives in villages and is illiterate, if not ignorant.

It is interesting to see how the cinema has grown to be one of the chief industrial assets of the country. Over the past five years the average yearly production has been about three hundred feature and short films. The State-controlled Films Division has a virtual monopoly of short films, producing twenty-six documentaries and fifty-two newsreels annually. Some idea of the more recent development of the industry can be gathered from the fact that imports of raw film stock have almost trebled in the last ten years.

Above : Hollywood's influence on the Indian film.

Right : "Jhansi Ki Rani," a recent Indian production which was shown at last year's Venice Festival.



Dhaniraj Phalke, the producer of the first Indian film (1913).

Three thousand or more cinemas entertain 21,000,000 people each week; and only the difficulty of building new cinemas prevents the film from reaching an even larger audience. The Five-Year National Plan, however, aims to provide at least one cinema in every small town, and a mobile unit to cover every village.

This target is a far cry from the days of the early silent "flickers". The first moving pictures were shown in a Bombay hotel by the Lumière Brothers, in 1896. *The Nineteenth Century* said in its editorial that month: "The Kinematograph is showing a stormy sea; the Thames at Waterloo Bridge; the race for the Derby. Panorama-like almost in continuity, but after all, like nothing but life itself; the actual scene, the actual world, these flash before you nine hundred and fifty instantaneous records in a minute, blending in an effect that is that, really, of your very presence on the Downs."

It was not until 1913, however, that Mr. Dhaniraj Phalke produced the first Indian film, *Raja Harishchandra*. It was a mythological story concerning gods, and a king who renounced his kingdom in favour of a beggar in order to seek truth in the Himalayas. It captured the imagination of the people by expressing their ancient faiths and traditions. *Raja Harishchandra* was followed by a spate of mythological stories, jerky in continuity, primitive in technique, and slow by the very nature of the subjects. Nevertheless, they became very popular, because the cinema was the cheapest form of entertainment.





A scene from "Anarkali," a silent film on a favourite Indian theme—the love of a prince for a commoner.

Moreover, it provided an escape from the prevailing political, social and economic conditions.

By the mid-twenties, the popularity of such subjects was waning. Audiences had become accustomed to Pearl White serials and gangster films, and clamoured for a change which threatened the very existence of Indian films. As a result, the Kohinoor Film Company produced the first string of "socials", copying the only available pattern, and turning out pale replicas of Hollywood films—films shorn of any social or human reality. They were murder mysteries or tales of the exploits of lecherous but golden-hearted gangsters, who plundered the rich and tossed the crumbs of their booty to the poor. Nothing but the background and the name made the films Indian. The pattern was so closely followed that even kissing in public, which is considered in the worst taste, became an additional box-office attraction. But Indian films failed to attain the vitality of the American originals they tried to imitate.

Unfortunately, classics like *Birth of a Nation*, *The Battleship Potemkin*, *Mother*, and many more films—from France and Germany notably—which helped to create techniques in Europe, were never shown in India; and it was not until the end of World War II that we had our first glimpse of the European cinema.

Even amidst this horrible jungle of crude and colourless film production, however, a more conscious and progressive

element arose. Literary doyens like Tagore, Sarat Chander and Prem Chand showed a keen interest in the new art form. There was a growing concern about content and form. As a result of all this, we got films like *The Bomb* (a strangely violent title for a most un-violent theme) in which the character of Gandhi was introduced to preach Hindu-Moslem unity. The film was banned by the Board of Censors, but later released under a different title—*The Glory of God!* Another significant film of those days was *Toy Cart*, based on the classic *Mrishkatik*. It described the life of a court dancer, a role which was played by Enakshi Rama Rao. At a time when the film, as a powerful medium of propaganda and entertainment, was acquiring some national character and local milieu, however, the coming of the "talkies" once again reduced it to a mere singing, dancing, talking novelty.

As soon as sound became an accepted fact, and the spell of the "talkies" as a novelty was cast off, India produced some significant films. Barua's *Dardas* was a happy augury. The film depicted the social facts of Indian life, artistically, realistically and humanely. It was a very told departure from conventional contemporary production. Shantaram's *Life is for Living*, Devaki Bose's *Seeta Vidya Pati* and Barua's *Zindigi* were also impressive.



With the coming of war, the standard of Indian films fell considerably. Romantic but unauthentic historical pictures, slapstick comedies, Arabian Nights love tales and "Boy Meets Girl" stories became the soothing dope for strained nerves. With the exception of Shantaram's *Story of Dr. Kotnis*, the realistic portrayal of a doctor who went to China with a medical mission and lost his life serving the sick and wounded soldiers, no worthwhile film was produced. Towards the close of the War, Bimol Roy's *Hamrahi* brought the Indian film closer to reality; it was the ever-present story of the conflict between capital and labour.

In the wake of *Hamrahi* came the Indian People's Theatre's *Children of Earth*—a realistic drama of famine in Bengal—Uday Shankar's *Kalpna*, and others. Although these films may be technically inferior to the best Western films, they indicate a new trend in the Indian cinema; and what is more important, are authentic expressions of Indian life.

B. D. GARGA.



Above : Realism in the Indian Cinema. A scene from the social drama "Hum Log."

Left : "Phantom of the Hills," a silent picture in which the actor Jairaj played a dual role.

RICHARD



WINNINGTON

Richard Winnington died on September 17th, 1953. These tributes show something of the affection and respect in which this fine critic and journalist was held by his friends, his colleagues and his readers.

The word "integrity" would probably have embarrassed Richard Winnington. It is much too pompous for him. Yet it will have to do to describe that quality of purpose and passion with which he dedicated himself to his work as a film critic.

When the rest of us were jaded and disillusioned by an unusually trying week of banality, there was Dick conscientiously scrabbling about for information about some undubbed Italian melodrama or some Hollywood B-film that had been guiltily stuffed into the suburbs without a Press showing. Bearing his eyestrain like a wound stripe, he would trundle off to view his third, or even fourth, film of the day leaving us to shake our heads in wonder at such devotion and such capacity for punishment.

It was because he cared so much that his unfavourable notices could sound as ruthless as a blunt doctor telling a patient he had only a week to live. Yet he never allowed his sense of indignation to dull his sense of humour. His wit was so quick and so feline his victims often only knew they had been scratched when they saw blood.

His deep political convictions sometimes led him to impute sinister motives to the making of bad films rather than resigning himself to the inevitability of incompetence. And if he demanded too much of the second-rate, no one could be more enthusiastic about the best.

The cinema, Dick once said, "is an art that nobody will let grow up." Even Wardour Street—when it finally realises that maturity is its only salvation—may regret the fact that he is no longer around to tell them what being adult means.

On a purely personal level, the job of seeing films has lost some of its congeniality and stimulation now that Dick is gone. We may not have shared all of each other's enthusiasms, but we certainly sympathised with each other's moans. He will be greatly missed.

MILTON SHULMAN.

Most of the film critics who write daily or weekly in newspapers hold their office by chance. They are journalists who happened to be on the spot when a film critic was wanted; or they are people whose ambitions lie elsewhere: they want to be writers, to be dramatists or novelists; sometimes they want to write films, or direct them. I am not denying the diversity of his interests and sympathies when I say that Richard Winnington wanted to be a film critic. In this work he found the expression of his talents, here was the means of saying the things he had to say. With Richard Winnington you never had the feeling that, like a self-important guest at a cocktail-party, he was looking over the shoulder of the cinema in the hope of seeing something more interesting come in.

Nearly all his work was done in newspaper columns, where the effect must be made, the praise bestowed or the blow delivered, in cramped quarters. Often his most telling criticisms were found in his drawings, bold yet exact in their capture of the essence of a film or a player. But anyone

who has studied his writing over the years can see how the instrument of words too grew more supple in his hands, how he gained in authority and freedom of pace. His integrity was absolute; I can do no more than subscribe to what many others have said of his courage and his rejection of compromise. We are all, I know, political animals even when we most strenuously deny it. Richard Winnington was more political and more openly political than most of his colleagues. In a way he wanted the cinema to be political. He liked it to speak for those who in a foolishly exclusive phrase are called the working classes; and I think that sometimes in his hatred of the glib and snobbish he rejected as false elements which corresponded with the natural human sentiments of the very people for whom he felt so deeply. But if this was an error, it was the error of a critic who served the cinema well and whose place there is none to fill. Perhaps it was itself part of his unflawed honour.

DILYS POWELL.

Richard Winnington influenced profoundly those of us who began to write about films at the time (1947-1950) when they were being drawn and quartered by him so brilliantly in the *News Chronicle*.

More than any other critic of any other art he affected us deeply. One admired Pritchett and Connolly and said how sound they were, but it was Winnington, the critic of a more vulgar art, whose authority was greatest.

Winnington never strained for an effect. One felt immediately that he meant what he wrote; he never covered-up, when dealing with a ticklish subject, by being cunningly non-committal. You always knew exactly where he stood.

For several years, as a young journalist, as I searched fumblingly for the right words, Winnington's work was the criterion against which I judged, not only everything that I attempted, but also everything that other journalists were attempting.

About the routine film he could be more succinctly witty than anyone, but it was when dealing with the work of some pretension that he was invaluable. His judgments were fundamental, never makeshift. His praise stamped a film with the hall-mark of quality. He never fell for the paste article, and he could spot a diamond even in its rough, uncut state.

To his disciples his pronouncements on the week's films came like edicts from a Pope—a somewhat heretical Pope. If one disagreed with him one had to re-examine one's set of values. Perhaps one was something of a heathen after all.

Winnington's work was part of his life; he could not review an Abbott and Costello film without betraying his attitude to the world. A whole personal philosophy could be read between the lines of his weekly column.

When I came to know him personally, I discovered at least one reason why he was the greatest critic-journalist of his time; he spent much of his life in cinemas, but he never allowed this world of plush and make-believe to become self-contained—he had a life-line which connected him with reality.

For him there was always the other world of the pub in the Edgware Road.

A. T. WEISMAN.

Richard Winnington's "other pen"—that of the highly versatile artist and brilliantly subtle caricaturist—was as penetrating as his writing pen.

I first met him and his work in 1936 and was struck by the individuality of his style. He was just beginning his career as a Press artist and illustrator of short stories and serials. His adult, provocative and witty mind brought a new and original technique to this art form. He was a slow, painstaking worker, who was never satisfied with the mere superficial "caricature", but would slip behind the celluloid masks of the film stars and with a few economic lines strip them of their glamour and reveal the truth. The finished work was a complete commentary in line and a perfect companion to his written text. Above all, through his drawings as through his writings shone an absolute integrity.

I shall miss my room-mate badly.

VICKY.

(Reprinted by permission of the News Chronicle.)

I never met Richard Winnington. And yet, as a devoted reader of his *News Chronicle* column for more than seven years, I seem to have known him well. Only the best journalists can establish this almost personal relationship between themselves and their readers. Why was he so satisfying to read? Why did one turn first to his page of the paper on "Winnington-day"? He wrote well, and often wittily. His enthusiasm, not easily stirred, was highly contagious. His drawings, wickedly brilliant, disclosed a fond irreverence for the idols of the cinema. Above all, he was completely honest.

Winnington obviously loved the cinema, but his was a critical, a demanding love. He never forgot the cinema's potential as a social force, moulding the taste, the values, the behaviour of millions. Some thought he asked too much of an industry which can ignore the box-office only at its peril, but perhaps he had more faith in the public than they. He was ready to salute good cinema in almost any context. His barbs, and they were sharp, were reserved for the trite, the vulgar and the pretentious. If he felt obliged to slate the mere box-office fodder of Hollywood, the over-publicised "epic", or the sillier efforts of our own studios, he would none the less delight in tracking down an unpretentious "B" picture of real quality which the distributors had perhaps not even bothered to show to the Press. I shall always be grateful to him for rescuing from obscurity such films as *The Window*, *They Live By Night*, *Act of Violence*, and a dozen others.

In the end one relies upon the critic whose standards and values come closest to one's own. I read many critics, but Winnington was my guide. What he enjoyed I was almost certain to enjoy. No wonder I feel as if I have lost a friend.

KENNETH ROBINSON, M.P.

The irony underlying Richard Winnington's tragically untimely death was and is that the film industry he served so well may never fully appreciate its loss.

He made the practical men supremely uncomfortable. They thought him capricious, arrogant, wilful and visionary, never realising that in Winnington they had something money could not buy: the dedicated man.

He loved films. He pushed and prodded us to make better films, never demanding that we succeed but only that we try. He walked in an aura of integrity.

He will be missed. He will be missed, even if they never know it, by the very men he annoyed because he tried to make them better than they were. He will be missed by the creators and artistes he scolded and encouraged and inspired. He will be missed by the cinema audiences for whom he fought—old, young and yet unborn—for whom he demanded not the minimum but the maximum potential of the filmic art.

And he was a warm man. He was, in the finest sense, kindly, generous, tolerant and very, very brave. These are familiar words, all too familiar and all too easy, but about Richard Winnington they are very true. To one like myself, he was a living representation of so much that is so admirable in the British spirit. And like that spirit, he was outside, larger than life. You always thought of him as a big man, so that when you met him again you were surprised because the physical man seemed smaller than the image you had carried in your mind. But the image was the reality.

There are so few Winningtons. A few in my country, a few in Europe. Only a handful.

He will be missed. He will be missed. He is missed. . . .

CARL FOREMAN.

(Extracts from an address at the Memorial Service for Richard Winnington held at St. Dunstan's in the West on October 23rd.)

Here was a man among men. A man who sought out honesty, who followed truth, who symbolised integrity.

Not integrity alone. Richard also knew love. The love of people—sometimes very ordinary people—that comes from understanding common feelings and sharing common likes and dislikes. He could indeed find the sharp and caustic word for those whom he thought betrayed the common trust, but he could find just as readily words of kindness and friendliness for those "down to earth" people who knew him as just "Dick", just around the place.

Richard Winnington the professional worker is best known to the public who followed and respected his work as a critic of films and as a caricaturist and artist of wit and sensitivity. Ephemeral indeed is the work of most film critics, lost in the dust of the newspaper files. Seldom does a film critic establish a viewpoint, an attitude to the art and entertainment

Richard Winnington's
"other pen"



Trevor Howard and
Celia Johnson in
"Brief Encounter"

he criticises; rarer still to maintain and develop that attitude to a medium ever in a state of change over the years. Like Louis Delluc in France, Otis Ferguson in New York, Winnington achieved this aim. An unwavering thread of continuity runs through all his criticism, an attitude reached only after years of close scrutiny and knowledge of this film medium he loved so much. He wrote as he drew with discipline and care for words and line, "with the true flash which can make a thing suddenly tender or explosive."

Winnington grew up with the cinema and brought an adult eye to its works. He knew its origins and roots and growing pains; he knew the struggles of its genuine exponents. He never wrote about a film from the past unless he had seen and judged it for himself. He saw each new film as an honest theatre critic or an honest literary critic sees a new play or reads a new book—in perspective with the growth of drama and literature. That is a virtue too seldom found among writers about the cinema—this restless and mercurial art of our time. Above all, his criticism—while being deadly true—was never merely destructive. If you did not resent criticism, there was much you could learn from a Winnington review if you chose.

Of compromise, he was no friend. On those who debased, misused, exploited this art of movement in pictures, which he believed to be the most expressive and alive of all the arts, on them he would cast his contempt and whip them with such carefully chosen words. He despised those who compromise for their own ease-of-living; scorned those who preach ideals but have not the strength to practise them. He was quick to detect the pompous, the precious, the smug and the sham—all the pseudo-intellectualism that grows up round the arts—the cinema especially. He exposed the cult of the rarified few; the snobbery of the clique. All this because he knew that the cinema was the popular art of the people and he asked that it should be used to bring out the best in people, not the worst. No wonder, then, that so many of the cinema's promoters failed to understand what Richard Winnington wrote and talked; their minds were too sophisticated. To them, he was someone odd indeed; a man who loved with a passionate sincerity a medium to which he devoted his life for reasons other than personal gain.

Richard Winnington did not strive for the higher reaches. To say honestly and freely what he thought about life as seen through the medium of the cinema was his eternal aim. He did not use his post as critic to achieve other ends. Once or twice only did he consider seriously using the film medium himself but circumstances never offered him the freedom he would have rightly asked. The more's the cinema's loss.

PAUL ROTH.



Book Reviews

FRENCH FILM, by Georges Sadoul. Illustrated. (Falcon Press, 16s.)

Reviewed by Ernest Lindgren

This is the latest in the admirable series of national film histories being published by the Falcon Press, and unquestionably the best in the series so far. This is not meant to reflect on the achievements of earlier contributors, but Georges Sadoul has initial qualifications for his task which they might well envy. He is that rare combination, a critic of great insight, and a historian of tireless industry. His ambitious *Histoire Générale du Cinéma*, which has now reached its fourth volume, is a contribution to film scholarship of classic proportions. When, therefore, he comes to write this shorter general survey for English readers he is disposing of matter, both historical and critical, of which he is complete master. The main lines are drawn without the confusion of unnecessary detail, and yet a knowledge of detail is implicit in all that is said. No national cinema (excepting always the American) has made such an impact on English audiences in recent years as the French, and this survey should therefore attract wide interest.

Films which individually are well known to many English cinemagoers are here illuminated by the way they are presented in relation to each other, and in relation to the general economic, cultural and artistic background from which they sprang. One picks up many curious facts on the way. We learn, for example, that in 1908 the single firm of Pathé Brothers sold twice as many films in the United States as all the American producing companies put together; or that productions made during the last winter of the last war were shot in unheated studios and "are recognisable by the clouds emerging from the players' breath, unless the director had remembered to take the precaution of making them suck ice before each shot." How one regrets that immediately after the First World War we had no one to preach for us in England the equivalent of what Louis Delluc was preaching in France: "The French cinema must be *cinéma*: the French cinema must be *French*." Sadoul makes it clear that the vitality which has always characterised French cinema at its best, which caused one critic to describe France as "the laboratory of the cinema", sprang in large measure from the enthusiasm with which the intellectuals and artists (Aragon, Soupault, Breton, Jacob, Apollinaire, Picasso) both before 1914 and after 1918, welcomed the films of their day, the films of Pearl White, Ince or Chaplin, and were receptive to their characteristic merits.

They became the leaders of an *avant-garde* audience, for which Louis Delluc wrote his articles in the *Paris-Midi*; articles which marked the beginning of independent criticism and established a critical tradition in France which has continued without equal to the present day.

Georges Sadoul writes with agreeable detachment in this same tradition, deftly and briefly summing up the critical value or historical importance of each film or film-maker as they pass in review. For example: "Le Chien Andalou cannot be said to have created a school. The gloomy Sang d'un Poète made not long afterwards by Jean Cocteau, was in some respects an imitation of it . . . but the film occupied very much the same position as a new coat of arms—made up of symbols easily deciphered by the spectator having the slightest acquaintance with the heraldic symbol system." (A brief description follows.) "All this autobiographical bric-à-brac, carried to the last pitch of refinement, gave off as it were an odour of decomposition. Its moments of sincerity, nearly always involuntary, were confined to the representation of manners. Cocteau's film, supreme expression of decadence, was the pillar of salt left beside the ruins of the Surrealist avant-garde." If he is not always kind to his compatriots, it is flattering to our vanity that he makes several complimentary references to British influences. Zecca, he tells us, began by plagiarising British productions, and he gives credit once more to the Brighton school for their anticipation of Griffith's editing methods. He also traces the invention of the comic chase in early silent films to Britain. Finally, it must be added that his chapters on the French film during the Occupation and since, which bring the story up to date, are exceptionally well done.

Having said so much in praise, it is a pity one must add that the production of the book is marred by minor faults due to careless or incompetent proof reading, which in a work of this kind are deplorable. The occasional grammatical fault the reader will detect for himself. He may not, however, detect such errors as: *La Belle Nièrnaise* (for *Nivernaise*); de Moholly Nagy (for Moholy Nagy); *A Quoi Rêvent les Jeunes Films* (for *Jeunes Filles*); *Rien que des Heures* (for *les Heures*); *Drei Gröschen Opera* (for *Dreigroschenoper*); *Le Voyage au Pôle* (for *La Conquête du Pôle*); it is also a pity that for example the German film known consistently in England and America as *The Last Laugh* is here disguised as *The Last Man* (a literal translation of the French title); or that the French comedian Gribouille (André Deed) is not identified by his familiar English name of Foolshead. This list could be extended; it is enough perhaps to say that no reader should allow slips of this kind to destroy his faith in the substance of the book, or in Georges Sadoul's integrity as a historian, for clearly he has no responsibility for them.

DIEU AU CINEMA, by Amedée Ayfre (Presses Universitaires de France, 570frs).

Reviewed by Lindsay Anderson

The characteristics of Catholic writing on the cinema have not perhaps been such as greatly to encourage one to a perusal of a book entitled *Dieu au Cinema*, written from an avowedly Catholic standpoint. One distrusts the—to a Protestant eye—apparent casuistry with which some Catholic writers seem able to justify, or at least condone, work not merely unsatisfactory from an æsthetic point of view, but sometimes morally pernicious, simply because it serves as effective propaganda for their Church. Thus, opening this book at random, and lighting upon a still of Celeste Holm and Loretta Young, impeccably nunned, grinning away tenderly behind a wire fence (*Come to the Stable*), one fears the worst. A glance at the caption, however, persuades us to think again: "... No, these women have not attained the fulness of joy of a Francis of Assisi, the simplicity of 'Little Flowers'. They have never emerged from a world of fairy tales and Father Christmas".

It is at once apparent that M. Ayfre is anything but an apologist for second- and third-rate Catholic cinéastes; he comments without fear or favour, with a pleasant irony and a conspicuous honesty. About, for instance, the "resolution" of *Angels with Dirty Faces* (in which gangster James Cagney pretends to die a coward's death in order to discourage his youthful admirers from following his example) he writes: "*An admirable lie perhaps, from a dramatic point of view, and cinematically extremely well realised . . . but a lie none the less, of which moreover one at once gets the aftertaste of dishonesty and jesuitism, when the priest replies 'yes' to the boys' anxious question as to whether the gangster died a coward*". M. Ayfre has no patience to spare for Father Crosby and Sister Ingrid, for Hollywood religiosity in general, or for anything æsthetically second-rate.

"Æsthetic" is the key word. For while the title of his book might lead us to expect simply an analysis and an evaluation of the various representations of religion by the cinema, M. Ayfre's purpose is more complex. The object of his enquiry is rather to study the expression of religious views in films from a strictly æsthetic point of view, and to seek to establish, if possible, some relationship between the degree of success with which kinds of religious feeling have been communicated, and the various æsthetic means of their realisation.

For this ambitious task, the author is well equipped. He is a graduate of the Sorbonne, and a member of the Institute of *Filmologie*. This latter qualification is somewhat ominous, for M. Cohen Séat—the inventor of the whole mysterious science of *Filmologie*—is none other than that formidable pedant who managed to write an entire book on the cinema without mentioning the title of a single film. Such, fortunately, is not the approach of M. Ayfre. He has evidently seen and enjoyed a lot of films; he knows well the historical background of his subject; and he is quite exceptionally responsive to the art of the cinema in practice.

It must be admitted that his book is of a fair density. Dividing the possible approaches to religion into four main categories—*Dans et par l'histoire*; *Dans et par la vie sociale*;

Dans et par la psychologie; *Dans la perspective phénoménologique*—M. Ayfre equates each of the last three with a national school of cinema—respectively the American, the French and the Italian neo-realist. Arguing with ingenuity and considerable penetration, he seeks to clarify the three-fold relationship between the religious values explicit in a number of particular films; the intellectual standpoint of the artists concerned; and the æsthetic means (the "film form") employed to give expression to those values and that standpoint. Thus, in his first category, he defines interestingly the conflict between the spiritual grandeur which it is the purpose of these films to portray, and the material grandiosity with which they are almost invariably realised.

In the American school he adduces an ingenious relationship between the absence of "tension" evident in these films (i.e. their denial of any transcendental values, symbolised by their refusal to portray the clergy in the performance of their sacramental functions; and their consistent reliance on the comfortable stereotype in place of the fallible human being), and the flat, assured academicism of their style. The French school he divides into films dominated by the actor (*Monsieur Vincent*), and films dominated by the director (principally Bresson); and the work of Rossellini and de Sica provides a starting point for an investigation of the "phenomenological" approach—that in which the artist accepts the world as he finds it, "*setting us face to face with a human event considered in the round, and abstaining from analysing it, breaking it into fragments*." The pursuit of these main lines of argument is varied by many lively discussions *en route*.

The game of æsthetic philosophy is one to which one either is, or is not, partial. M. Ayfre, who clearly relishes it, plays it with skill and general reasonableness, even if he does get led away here and there into thickets of abstraction extremely difficult to penetrate. Some of his classifications seem arbitrary. It is cheating, surely, to include *Monsieur Vincent* under "La Psychologie" (just because it is French) instead of under "Dans et par l'histoire". Often, too, it is difficult to feel that his inclusion of certain films in the enquiry is justified at all. Is the humane idealism of *The Grapes of Wrath* really any more "religious" than that of *The Ox-Bow Incident* or *The Childhood of Maxim Gorki*? And the whole section on the Italian cinema—with the exception of the revolting *Cielo Sulla Palude*, which M. Ayfre strangely approves of, and whose relevance is admittedly direct—seems something of a side-track.

Even those, however, whose approach to the cinema is more pragmatic, will find a lot in this book to interest and to stimulate. M. Ayfre, as I have said, looks at films with an acute and searching eye; he is sensitive to film style as are few writers on the cinema, he can analyse the creative influences on a film of camerawork, script, découpage and acting with a justice that is always illuminating. One may well disagree with some of his judgments, just as one may find the more theoretical turns of his arguments difficult to grasp; but I should say that it is impossible for anyone seriously interested in the cinema to read through this book without an exceptional amount of pleasure and profit. The long section on Bresson alone, with its brilliant analysis of the director's style, and a most perceptive comparison of the film of *Le Journal d'un curé de Campagne* with Bernanos' novel, would justify the rest of your trouble.

DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS, THE FOURTH MUSKETEER, by Ralph Hancock and Letitia Fairbanks. Illustrated. (Peter Davies, 15s.)

Reviewed by David Robinson

Douglas Fairbanks was one of that little group of performers whose stardom, coming at the moment when the film suddenly assumed its place as the first medium of real mass entertainment, thrust them into unprecedented prominence. With incomes "greater than the combined salaries of all the American ambassadors to Europe", courted by the world's wealth and aristocracy, they were necessarily figures of fable, whom truth seemed unable to touch.

The first part of this book is still under the influence of the fable. It is hard to credit a biography which reproduces verbatim conversations which took place, unwitnessed, seventy years before. The story of the Alger-like strides by which

Fairbanks rose to fame is well known—his early theatrical struggles and successes, interrupted by a wealthy marriage and intervals during which he bummed his way round Europe or worked in law and hardware; his unwilling entry into films (“*I know, but the movies!*”); Griffith’s suggestion that he try Keystone comedies; the creation of the screen personality by Anita Loos and John Emerson; the successive triumphs which made him the world’s hero.

It is when the peak of his career is past that the book becomes most interesting and convincing. The fables are forgotten, and a real person appears—a man who, having had the world at his feet, finds himself in a decline he cannot comprehend. His fame, fortune and delight sprang from the vigour of youth; and even Fairbanks was no longer young at fifty. He was frightened of age, jealous of his son’s youth. His wife had left him. Most tragic of all, the conscientiousness which had always marked his work deserted him; and the restlessness which had until now driven him forward, served only to make his work careless and slipshod.

For all its florid English and lapses into the style of a mid-Victorian memoir, in its account of this last period of Fairbanks’s life, and his relationship with his son, the book is creditably honest, and often perceptive in its comment.

The authority for most of this account of Fairbanks’s private life seems to have been his brother Robert. The absence of any testimony by Mary Pickford or Lady Ashley, Douglas’s second and third wives, although understandable, is nevertheless a serious defect.

Another gap is the want of a fuller account and examination of his “philosophy” and the eight “inspirational” books that were published under his name between 1917 and the mid-’twenties.

For the cinéaste this book has little new to offer. There are interesting glimpses of Fairbanks at work:

“Much of the grace and ease with which Doug performed his stunts . . . was due to Allan Dwan’s coaching. . . . You may remember scenes where Fairbanks apparently without looking leaped to the top of a table or other prop during a fast sword fight. The height of the tables was measured and the legs sawn off to the point where Doug could leap on to them without glancing at his footing.”

But, for the most part, the authors have been content to accept and reproduce, with or without acknowledgment, Alistair Cooke’s assessment of Fairbanks’s screen personality, astounding physical achievements and artistry. The most succinct appraisal seems still, however, the opinion of the barnstorming actor, Frederick C. Warde, who saw Douglas act as a boy: “*More vigour than virtuosity*”.

ALEC GUINNESS, by Kenneth Tynan. Illustrated. (Rockcliff, 12s. 6d.)

THE ACTOR’S WAYS AND MEANS, by Michael Redgrave. Illustrated. (Heinemann, 10s. 6d.)

Reviewed by Philip Hope-Wallace

The actor’s art is mysterious to those who do not practise it and, if you get talking, it seems often mysterious also to those who do. We get gossip and some good dramatic criticism now and again, but very little is written about acting from inside. It is as if actors instinctively feel that too much self-analysis will turn them into those antitheses of spontaneous creative artists: the critics. Kenneth Tynan’s slim book on Alec Guinness is an excellent record, but it is much more; it tries to get at the mystery of *how* Guinness is a chameleon and why there is not one Guinness but a legion. This is borne out by rows of photographs showing us the extreme versatility of this protean creature whom Mr. Tynan calls “a master of anonymity”, capable in a strange way of eclipsing his own personality and assuming another concocted out of his imagination. If the trick or gift remains unexplained finally, as it does in the case of Ruth Draper too, there is still a lot worth making precise about Guinness’s style of playing—which Mr. Tynan rightly finds to be the very opposite of “personality” acting. Hence to the question whether the cinema (which to a certain extent “acts for” an actor), may not provide the clue; and the suggestion that Guinness is the foremost and first actor of our times to synthesise the apparently antagonistic arts of stage and film acting. All most interesting.

Michael Redgrave, one of our most self-analytical yet best actors, delivered a series of lectures at Bristol University on “An Actor’s Ways and Means”, and this thought-provoking book is the outcome. Here are problems on which the profession differs as much as critics. What *depth* of imaginative surrender is necessary to make a character part “work” with the audience? Is Stanislavsky right? Do audiences really in some mystical way “make” a play, which is a lifeless thing till touched by their response? (Redgrave says no, this is pure superstition.) Between Sarah Bernhardt’s “*One must always think of one’s own pleasure*” and Jouvett’s “*Success is the sole criterion in the theatre*”, there are fascinating side lines to pursue. This little volume, which is illustrated with many photographs showing (unlike those of Guinness) how marvelously Redgrave changes yet is always somehow the same, is a testament by a most intelligent artist to his Muse. And, for old lectures, most readable.

The Seventh Art

World’s first 3-D casualty has had to have first aid treatment in hospital. This is what he told the doctors: “I was standing in the street looking up when I noticed something falling; I watched it until it hit me smack in the eye. It proved to be a big potato. I blame the accident on 3-D movies. Having so many things thrown at me from the screen must have given me a false sense of security.” (*The Daily Sketch*.)

★ Surrealist painter Salvador Dali announced in Nice that he is about to go into a new motion picture venture . . . a movie starring Italy’s earthy Anna Magnani, in which she will play a woman in love with a wheelbarrow. “The name of the film will be *The Wheelbarrow of Flesh*”, explained Dali, “and she will find in that object all the qualities and charms of a human being . . . it’s terrific”. (*Time*.)

★ The State of Maryland Censors ban the Alec Guinness film *The Captain’s Paradise*. The thing that really outraged them was that, in showing boredom when he was with his legal wife (Celia Johnson), Guinness “tended to bring the institution of marriage into disrespect”. (*The Daily Express*.)

★ *The Robe* in CinemaScope relates the greatest story of love and faith ever told . . . it stuns with its glory as it embraces the audience without the use of spectacles. (20th Century-Fox’s advance publicity announcement.)

At the “Roman Room” of a restaurant named Sasha’s Palate, the tired moviemaker can lie down to a juicy buffalo steak, in what Hollywood considers Roman fashion. Upon entering the candle-lit, gold-draped room, the diners toss their shoes into a basket and recline on a five-foot-wide divan which stretches round the walls. Sinking into a sea of pillows, and gazing at a projection screen showing a Roman garden, the guests are served by waitresses dressed in silky purple pantaloons and boleros. . . . Among the regular Romans, some of whom like to wear togas for the occasion: Robert Cummings, Ray Milland, Lucy and Desi Arnaz. Explains Sculptor-Restaurateur Atanas Katchamakoff: “The Roman Room gives people a chance to be aristocrats, be elemental, to enjoy themselves like before the last days of Pompeii.” (*Time*.)

★ Mr. Koster revealed . . . that it was no coincidence that British actors were cast in Roman parts in *The Robe*. He said this was done to distinguish between Middle East characters and the refined, cultured citizens of Rome. (*Today’s Cinema*.)

★ In a Sunset night club a flaring row broke out between Shelley Winters and husband Vittorio (Gassman). They yelled and screamed and pounded the table. Columnists rushed to get the gory details. Said Shelley: “We were having a discussion on whether the films were an art form”. (*The Picturegoer*.)

THE FILM 'STORY'

Arnold Bennett

Arnold Bennett was, in the middle 'twenties, at the height of his popular and financial success. His newspaper articles, notably those in the Evening Standard, were amazingly influential and, according to his biographer, Mr. Reginald Pound, "his photograph, distended to poster-size for bus-top display . . . was among the familiar details of the London traffic momentum". In 1922 he, along with Barrie and Kipling, had been approached by Jesse Lasky, who was then trying to induce distinguished European writers to work for the screen. In 1929, Bennett wrote the script for E. A. Dupont's Piccadilly; British International Pictures, he commented, were "enchanted" with it.

This article appeared in Close Up for December 1927 and is reprinted here by permission of the Owners of the Copyright.

One can only judge by one's own experience. My own experience is limited. I have not spent every evening of the last twenty years in film-theatres. But, so far as my limited experience enables me to judge, I consider that America has no artistic importance whatever in the world of the cinema. Technically, in the matter of camera-craft, it has had importance. Commercially it has had, and still has, great importance. The financial methods, the absurd extravagance, the indifference to economic principles which have characterised film-exploitation in America would have ruined any industry with less rich opportunities and less vast fields of activity than the films. One hears rumours of the perilous position of some of the big companies. The marvel is that they have not all gone bankrupt.

As regards the artistic future of the film, it would not matter—provided that Chaplin were saved—if all Hollywood were swallowed up in an earthquake. The loss of life would be terrible and deplorable: the domestic tragedies would be agonizing; tens of millions of simple souls would sincerely mourn in five continents; but the artistic future of the film world would not suffer in the slightest degree. I have never—Chaplin's work apart—seen a good American film. I have rarely seen one that was not artistically revolting. Not one of the famous American directors has left a permanent mark on film history, or produced anything that would not deeply grieve the judicious.

I must specially except Charles Chaplin, who, in addition to being a great actor, is a great producer. *The Gold Rush*, while not perfect in some essential matters, was a great film. It would bear seeing twice.

The future of the films seems to me to be in Germany. I have seen dreadful German films. One of the silliest and worst was *Metropolis*. But I have seen two relatively good ones, *The Last Laugh* and, still better, *Vaudeville*. *The Last Laugh* was too long, too confused, and too sentimental in the middle; but towards the end the director pulled himself together and created real effective comedy which was conceived with a true appreciation of the medium. The photography frequently had beauty.

Vaudeville told a convincing story, spoilt only by lack of attention to detail. Surely it must have been obvious to even the common intelligence that no gymnasts engaged in dangerous acrobatic feats every evening could possibly have indulged in the nocturnal excesses which the strong men of *Vaudeville* permitted themselves. The photography was beautiful. By which I mean that the pictorial composition, both statically and dynamically, was beautiful. The eye was again and again charmed by beautiful pictures made out of men and women and out of common interiors. To achieve this was a feat.

And I have seen finer compositional results than those of *Vaudeville*. A few weeks ago, in Berlin, a small party

of which I happened to be a member was given a private performance of a film (I will not name it, as it is not yet released) whose photography in my opinion reached a higher level than any film has ever reached before. It was an almost continuous series of lovely pictures. The beauty of them thrilled us. And the acting was fairly good. But the story told by the lovely pictures was contemptible. It had no intelligible basic idea, nor any convincingness, nor any characterisation, nor any beauty. The plot was involved, obscure, and slow in movement. And the invention of illustrative incident was puerile. Indeed the story was merely foolish.

I mention this film because it suddenly crystallised my critical notions about the present state of development of the cinema. It constituted a superlative illustration of the fact that while the graphic side of the cinema has been most satisfactorily advancing, the dramatic side has been most unsatisfactorily lagging behind. The creative brain which conceived and executed the graphic side in a manner to win the respect of the artistically educated seemed to possess no critical faculty capable of handling the dramatic side in a way correspondingly adequate.

Apparently the leaders of the cinema have not yet grasped the fundamental truth that the most important part of any creative film is the story itself, and that all other parts of the enterprise are merely parts of an effort to tell the story.

In other words they forget, or they disdain, the central reason for their work. They are so excited and so busy in "producing" that they lose sight of what it is they are producing. The act of creation interests them far less than the act of "putting over" that which has been created. In the judgment of the master-brain of the affair, the author is subordinate to the interpreter. The master-brain thinks first of how much he can spend on the business, not of how little. Instead of trying first to derive strength from the main theme, the master-brain tries first to give strength to the theme. The master-brain is occupied with extraneous ornament instead of being occupied with dramatic essentials.

Any story will serve for a star-producer. And if by chance he gets hold of a good story he is sure somehow to ruin it by preposterous additions. I have not yet seen a first-rate story told in a first-rate style on the screen. All the new stories, contrived *ad hoc*, are conventional, grossly sentimental, clumsy, and fatally impaired by poverty of invention. The screen has laid hands on some of the greatest stories in the world, and has cheapened, soiled, ravaged, and poisoned them by the crudest fatuities.

Even Charles Chaplin shows immensely less talent for devising a tale, than for any of the subsidiary branches of film-work.

It is no answer here to say that the big public demands bad stories. The big public may or may not demand bad

stories. I am discussing, not the commercial aspect of the screen, but the question of its artistic progress. I am thinking of art and not of dividends. Those who think first of vast expense and vaster returns will never do anything for the film as an artistic vehicle. In regard to finance I will only say this—that it costs less to do an artistic film than an inartistic film. Chariot-races, the dividing of seas for the passage of hosts, conflagrations, battles on water and battles on land may make an audience stare, but what grips and moves an audience is the simple spectacle of human emotions clashing one with another.

The remedy is clear. If and when a producer acquires the true sense of proportion which alone will enable him to perceive the relative importance of the different parts of his job, he must, unless he has himself the gift of creating character and contriving event, find somebody who has that gift—in terms of the screen. Useless for him to go to established and therefore middle-aged masters of literary narration. To all these distinguished artists the screen is still a novelty. The film-medium does not come naturally to them because they were not familiar with it in their formative years—the only years that count in the making of an artist. The producer must discover young men who went to the cinema as children, who cannot remember the time when there was no cinema, and who will take to the screen as a duck takes to water. The older men who accept an invitation to the screen are bound to resemble ducks endeavouring to fly. They may fly, but their flight will be laborious, maladroit and pathetic.

All which is obvious; the obvious, however, is often useful.

THE SOUND TRACK

“ . . . and the stereophonic sound—whatever that is ” (Milton Shulman on “ Young Bess ” at The Empire, Leicester Square).

Modern systems of stereophonic sound use three microphones to the left, centre and right of the scene being filmed. In the dubbing stage a further set of music and effects material is usually recorded on a fourth channel. Reproduction is therefore normally carried out with four tracks being played simultaneously (as in the Telecinema) and the outputs may be fed to banks of speakers located in different parts of the theatre. The quality of a stereoscopic or wide screen picture is presented simultaneously to all members of the audience, but stereophonic sound depends on two local factors, i.e. the degree of reverberation and the relationship to the loudspeakers of each individual spectator. In the front seats, the screen loudspeakers will predominate and echo will tend to be minimised; at the back the effects speakers may be proportionately stronger in relation to the main horns, while reflected sound may play a larger part in the total effect. The result is that we may anticipate a general increase in the realistic quality of the sound rather than any elaborate “ stunt ” impact, as in the visuals. Nevertheless, certain discernible points may be noted, and *House of Wax* is a good representation of present trends in the 3-D developments.

Like most experiments today (including the Telecinema) a kind of half-stereo compromise has been attempted in the case of the Warner picture. Much of the recording, especially with the music track, employed standard practices of multi-microphone techniques, and an artificial allocation of musical phrases was made in the re-recording; spot effects were treated in a similar manner. The most successful episode in *House of Wax* is the fire sequence from the earlier part of the film, with its growing crescendo of sound that gradually overwhelms the audience. Some sounds of individual crashes (a chair being thrown, for example) were too strongly pointed and

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timing became vague. If a chair is thrown stereoscopically at the audience, it is logical that it should pass out-of-camera before the crash comes, yet the delayed sound gives a curiously "out-of-sync" effect. Hearing a sound stereophonically of an object that is out of vision is a convention we may have to grasp slowly as 3-D discovers its true form of narration; perhaps Hitchcock will have some ideas.

Precisely the same drawback arises with off-screen dialogue, and the Warner manipulation of the two main sequences failed on these grounds. Employing a routine style of cutting between a character approaching the main set and the central figure maintaining an "approach" conversation, the recordist had manoeuvred the tracks in an attempt to place the off-screen character stereophonically in perspective. The result was a startling variation in volume and acoustic as the cuts presented the audience first with one character and then the other.

In CinemaScope ("you see it without the use of special glasses") the four-track system is again employed, all crowded with the visuals on one strip of 35 mm. film by the use of magnetic striping. In this case, the chief snags arise in connection with the dialogue by virtue of the great distances separating the loudspeakers between the sixty-foot screen. Sitting fairly close to the screen during a performance of *The Robe*, the speech originates in three clearly-defined areas, depending on where the characters are standing. This gradually becomes acceptable but as soon as a cut occurs, involving a change in camera viewpoint (a "reverse" shot, for example) all the speech has to be re-distributed to suit the new positions of the characters. Thus, in a scene involving Richard Burton, Jean Simmons and Ernest Thesiger, each character spoke through his or her own loudspeaker position from the left, centre or right side of the screen. Suddenly a cut occurred and immediately all the voices had to be re-distributed to suit the new camera set-up. The effect on the audience is jarring and may involve a new approach to the whole topic of stereophony in dialogue.

We have not yet heard a music track on the new systems to equal Norman McLaren's drawn glissandos of rippling sound, where carefully-planned distribution of individual rhythmic and melodic phrases produced a "bite" not previously encountered in electrically-reproduced music. David Buttolph provided standard melodrama for *House of Wax* and left it to the sound engineers to "stereophone" as best they could. Alfred Newman was content to "heavenly-choir" in quadruplicate for his big moments, although CinemaScope offers some opportunities for "off-screen" musical effects which have not yet been fully tested, apart from the "military bands off" of the Wide-Screen Coronation scenes and occasional triumphant martial entrances in *The Robe*.

A great deal has yet to be learnt about the new techniques and, on the evidence of *The Robe*, it must be admitted that the sound track has yet to tackle its problems with the same care as has been applied to the CinemaScope visuals.

JOHN HUNTLEY.

CORRESPONDENCE

Monsieur Vincent

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

Sir,—As a Catholic I find David Fisher's remarks about the film *Monsieur Vincent* in his article *The Saint in the Cinema* (SIGHT AND SOUND, October-December, 1953) objectionable.

He says: "In the place of violence which is inherent in any great passion (the Saint's passion for the poor), the film gives us only good intentions and conventional theology."

Good intentions? The film is concerned with fact, not intention; it simply shows us a very little of what St. Vincent did. Violence? A saint is canonised (by that Authority Mr. Fisher derides) for his capacity for love, and for nothing else. "Though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profits me nothing." There is violence in passion; there is none in charity, which believes, hopes, endures all things. As for theology, which is the classified science of the knowledge of God, it was not even mentioned in the film. Personally I would have been charmed to see St. Vincent

preaching, in the balanced seventeenth century manner, on the Real Presence, but I suspect Mr. Fisher would find such "conventional theology" a little too unconventional.

"Any similarity between the saint and the simple minded puppet of the film being purely coincidental." Mr. Fisher's irritation with this performance is the measure of its perfection. It is just that gentle, serene, balanced love of God and man radiated by Fresnay which characterises Christian France, a quality alien to the tortured modern quest for ugliness which seems to soothe Mr. Fisher. Whether he likes it or not, St. Vincent was known for charity, gentleness and faith, certainly not for violence in however good a cause. "*Ce bon Monsieur Vincent*", his own generation called him. There must be something in the nature of the ineffable Pierre Fresnay which makes a very few critics react to him as the Devil does to holy water. He is certainly not considered simple-minded in France. "He has a superfluity of luminous understanding," Colette once said of him. Or is Mr. Fisher objecting to that conversion to little children without which none of us enters the Kingdom of Heaven? Or is he seriously maintaining it is Jean Anouilh who is simple-minded?

"La vraisemblance est si éclatante que notre émotion n'aurait pas été beaucoup plus authentique si nous avions vu Saint Vincent de Paul apparaître en personne devant nous. Je parlais d'un miracle. Peut-être faut-il l'attribuer au Saint lui même, qui a choisi cette façon de rendre plus compréhensible son exemple aux foules, trois cents ans après sa mort."

Claude Mauriac on Fresnay's performance expresses my own thought. I do not understand how anyone could contemplate unmoved that performance, that "sanctity like a bed of lavender", as Robert Speaight said. If Mr. Fisher finds lavender has lost its savour he is in a bad way, and I recommend the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.

And why cannot he get his facts right? He says: "Aided by the Comedie-Francaise in the person of Pierre Fresnay..." This film was made in 1947. Monsieur Fresnay left the Comedie-Francaise in 1927. This up-to-date information does not inspire confidence in Mr. Fisher's accuracy.

Yours faithfully,

E. D. TURBIN (Miss).

53 Chestnut Grove,
New Malden,
Surrey.

Ornithology

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

Sir,—I should like to draw your attention to a photograph in the October-December, 1953, issue of SIGHT AND SOUND. It is from Arne Sucksdorff's *The Great Adventure* on page 85 of the magazine, and depicts Sucksdorff retreating from the attack of a "woodcock". However, this bird is obviously not a woodcock but appears to be a capercaillie.

It occurred to me that perhaps a mistake had been made in the translation of the bird's name, as the literal translation of the Welsh name for capercaillie is "cock of the wood".

Hoping I have been of some use in drawing this matter to your attention.

Yours faithfully,

CYNTHIA M. MERRETT.

Department of Zoology,
National Museum of Wales,
Cardiff.

Miss Merrett is, of course, quite right. We apologise for a mistake in translation and for our inability to recognise a capercaillie.—Editor.

Protest Registered

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

Sir,—May I register a protest with regard to the cover picture on the last issue of SIGHT AND SOUND? A more unattractive study would be difficult to imagine. There are hundreds of attractive scenes from films, of which many must be available for reproduction. Why try (unsuccessfully in my opinion) to compete with the commercial magazine by giving us a not very attractive piece of cheesecake?

Yours faithfully,

RALPH L. BROUGHTON.

Ibis Film Society,
142 Holborn Bars,
London, E.C.1.

(THE FIRST GOLDEN AGE, *Continued from page 151*)

were to increase gradually over the ten years of the Act's life to a maximum of 20 per cent in both cases. In addition to the quotas, the Act also endeavoured to help British films by restricting the more monopolistic booking practices which had in the past effectively reserved British screen-time for American films.

That British film production required some measure of protection there can be no doubt. It is an old, sad story of how after a brave start in the early days of the cinema the production industry gradually declined, losing ground before 1914, battered down during the war while the American industry expanded rapidly, and then unable to win a secure place in its own home market against an all-powerful competitor. Despite a short-lived revival in 1920, when there were 144 British feature films available, the decline continued, and by November, 1924, the nadir was reached when, according to the trade Press, "*not a single foot of film was being exposed on any British floor*".

This bleak state of affairs could no longer be ignored. In the summer of 1925 there were debates on the industry in both Houses of Parliament, and it was announced that the Board of Trade was conducting "searching investigations". Then followed a year of meetings, statements and arguments until in 1926 the Government declared that if

no voluntary scheme could be agreed upon legislative action would be taken to impose quotas and alter booking practices. That action was eventually taken and it proved to be the first step in a long progress of protection which continues to the present day.

The immediate effect of this Act was, of course, to stimulate production, and in 1928 64 British feature films were trade shown—almost double the previous year's figure. Old companies were revived, new ones formed, and "*money, which has in past years fought shy of pictures except perhaps in the theatres and of the business, has flowed much more freely*". During the year the total value of the authorised capital floated for film companies amounted to no less than £10 million, of which the greater part was issued. While it is true that the lion's share of this was for exhibition, nonetheless production also benefited to the extent of nearly £2 million nominal capital.

But it is not enough to measure the effects of the Act only in these terms. Of outstanding importance for the future of the British film industry was the emergence of the large groups which now play such a prominent part in its affairs, and which were created as a direct result of the Act.

A further article will appear in the April issue of SIGHT AND SOUND, surveying the development of the British industry in the early 1930's.

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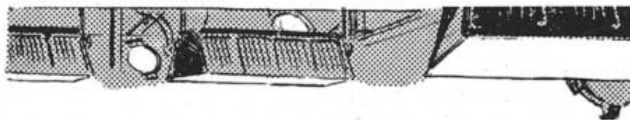
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